

DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



With Thrilling True Stories
FORMERLY FLYNN'S

The Murdered Wax Figure

By
Murray
Leinster



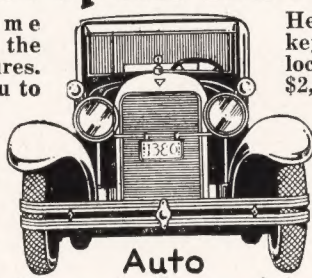


Win \$2000

and NEW HUDSON TOWN SEDAN!

Find The Key That Opens The Treasure Chest

Many people have become wealthy almost overnight by the discovery of hidden treasures. Here is an opportunity for you to experience the thrills of a treasure hunt and receive \$2,000.00 in CASH and a brand new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN. All you need is a sharp eye to discover the right key which may lead you to the treasure of \$2,000.00 in CASH and also a brand new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN for promptness.



**Auto
Goes for Promptness
Winner Gets CASH
and AUTO BOTH**

Here is a treasure chest and ten keys, one of which will open the lock. Find the right key. Make the \$2,000.00 yours and get the HUDSON TOWN SEDAN, too, for promptness. There's too much at stake for you to delay a minute. These keys are all the same size and apparently are exactly alike. If your eyes are sharp you may find a key different from the other nine. The top, the bottom, the shaft, the notches or anything else is likely to be the point of difference. If you find the right key it may mean \$2,000.00 and the Hudson or \$3,500.00 cash if you prefer.

20 Other Cash Prizes

There are hundreds of dollars in these other cash prizes besides the \$2,000.00 CASH first prize and the new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN for promptness. That's not all. We will award hundreds of others with \$1.25 worth of our products FREE. If your eyes are sharp enough, you may win the \$2,000.00 CASH first prize and the new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN, too, for promptness, if on time—or if you prefer, \$3,500.00 in all.

THIS IS NOT A MAGAZINE CONTEST *Some Person with a Sharp Eye is Going to Win*

If you can find the lucky key, you may win. You do not have to buy or sell any magazines to win any of the 21 big CASH prizes. We are offering these prizes to quickly advertise the name and products of the Paris-American Pharmacal Company. To make them better known, we are dividing our profits and absolutely giving away the \$2,000.00 CASH first prize, 20 other CASH prizes and in addition a new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN for promptness. What's still more duplicate prizes will be given on all awards in case of final ties.

*If you find the Right Key,
mark it with an "X" and
Mail this Ad Quick*

Put an "X" on the key right away if you find it. Cut out this ad and rush it to us at once. Be quick—because the first prize winner if on time, gets the \$2,000.00 CASH and a new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN, too—or \$3,500.00 in all. If you win the \$2,000.00 CASH first prize you will want the new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN. Send your answer TODAY. We will forward you at once complete rules of this prize offer, telling you how close you are to winning, how to get the \$2,000.00 first prize and make the new HUDSON TOWN SEDAN yours. There will be no delay in giving you your award, so mail your answer at ONCE.

PARIS-AMERICAN PHARMACAL CO., Dept. MC-8, Fifth and Court Ave., Des Moines, Iowa



"Four Raises in Two Years"

"AND it hasn't been hard to get them, either. Why, it seems only yesterday that I was wondering if I would ever make as much as \$45 a week. And now I'm making \$75.

"Tom Dawson was speaking about it today. 'Gee,' he said, 'I wish I had started studying with the I. C. S. when you did. Here I am plugging away at the same old job and the same old salary while you've gone 'way up. I bet you're making twice as much as I am. And to think that two years ago we were working side by side.'

"I told him it wasn't too late if he would only make the start and he said he was going to send in one of those I. C. S. coupons right away.

"I hope he does, because an I. C. S. course is the very thing he needs to get out of the rut. I wouldn't be making anywhere near \$75 a week if I hadn't started to study just when I did."

Thousands of men now know the joy of happy, prosperous homes because they let the International Correspondence Schools prepare them in spare time for bigger work.

You will find them in city, town and country—in offices, factories, shops, stores, mines and mills—on farms and on railroads. There are clerks who became Advertising Managers, Salesmen and Executives—carpenters who became Architects and Contractors—mechanics who became Engineers and Electrical experts—men and

boys who rose from nothing at all to splendid, responsible positions.

One hour after supper each night, spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home, will prepare you for the position you want in the work you like best.

This is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, put it up to us to prove how we can help you. Just mark and mail this coupon for full particulars.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 2245-D, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject before which I have marked X in the list below:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Electrical Engineering | ☐ Architect |
| ☐ Electric Lighting | ☐ Architects' Blueprints |
| ☐ Mechanical Engineer | ☐ Contractor and Builder |
| ☐ Mechanical Draftsman | ☐ Architectural Draftsman |
| ☐ Machine Shop Practice | ☐ Structural Draftsman |
| ☐ Railroad Positions | ☐ Concrete Builder |
| ☐ Gas Engine Operating | ☐ Structural Engineer |
| ☐ Civil Engineer | ☐ Chemistry |
| ☐ Coal Mining | ☐ Pharmacy |
| ☐ Surveying and Mapping | ☐ Automobile Work |
| ☐ Plumbing and Heating | ☐ Aviation Engines |
| ☐ Steam Engineering | ☐ Agriculture |
| | ☐ Navigation |
| | ☐ Mathematics |
| | ☐ Radio |

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Business Management | ☐ Salesmanship |
| ☐ Industrial Management | ☐ Advertising |
| ☐ Personnel Management | ☐ Business Correspondence |
| ☐ Traffic Management | ☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering |
| ☐ Accounting and C. P. A. | ☐ Stenography and Typing |
| Coaching | ☐ English |
| ☐ Cost Accounting | ☐ Civil Service |
| ☐ Bookkeeping | ☐ Railway Mail Clerk |
| ☐ Secretarial Work | ☐ Grade School Subjects |
| ☐ Spanish | ☐ High School Subjects |
| ☐ French | ☐ Illustrating |
| | ☐ Cartooning |

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.



DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XLIII

Saturday, August 3, 1929

NUMBER 3

NOVELETTES AND SHORT STORIES

- The Murdered Wax Figure Novelle** Murray Leinster 289
The Mystery of a Strange Effigy
- Even Money Novelle** Erle Stanley Gardner 330
Lester Leith in a Gem Mix-up
- The Guilt Detector** Dudley Hoys 385
A Good Detective Is a Bluffer
- Sob Stuff** Leslie McFarlane 417
A Crying Crook Sheds a Bucketful

TRUE STORIES

- The Masked Man** Cyrus Chapin 374
The Mystery of the Missing Pay Rolls
- I Was a Bandit Six Parts—4** Eddie Guerin 392
Imprisoned on the Island of Horror

SERIAL

- The Secret Five Parts—2** John Hunter 348
The Mysterious "Mr. Brown" Signs Off

FEATURES AND FACTS

- Character Revealed In Your Handwriting** John Fraser 426
- Flashes From Readers** 429
- Solving Cipher Secrets** M. E. Ohaver 431

This Magazine is on sale every Wednesday throughout the United States and Canada

THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y., and

**LONDON: HACHETTE & CIE.,
16-17 King William Street, Charing Cross, W. C. 2**

**PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.,
111 Rue Réaumur**

G. T. DIXON, President

ARTHUR B. GAUNT, Treasurer

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; in Canada \$7.00, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1929

Entered as second-class matter September 4, 1924, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879

TITLE REGISTERED IN U. S. PATENT OFFICE

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

Have You the COURAGE To Take It?



This \$2,000,000.00 Guarantee of a JOB and RAISE?

Of course you'd like to earn \$50 or \$75 or \$100 a week—you'd like to do more interesting work—you'd like to get into a line that offers a real future—but do you know how to go about getting these things?



"Only one other man and I, of six taking California State Board examination for Architect passed. Then I realized the thorough and practical training given by American School. In 18 months I have gone from tracer to Chief Draftsman, in charge of all architectural and engineering work in one of the oldest offices here." R. L. WARREN, Los Angeles, Cal.



"When I started American School training in the Spring of 1915 I was working 14 hours a night, seven nights a week, for \$1.53 a night. That Fall I got a job in the Engineering Department of a large firm near here. Today I work 5 1/2 days a week and my salary is larger than I ever dreamed of when I began that course in Mechanical Drafting." B. H. SEEVERS, South Bend, Ind.

If you have been thinking of "taking a course" but have held back because you were afraid you didn't have education enough to learn better-paid work—if you have hesitated to take the risk that it would actually land you in the better position and increase your salary—then here's the best news you ever heard in your life!

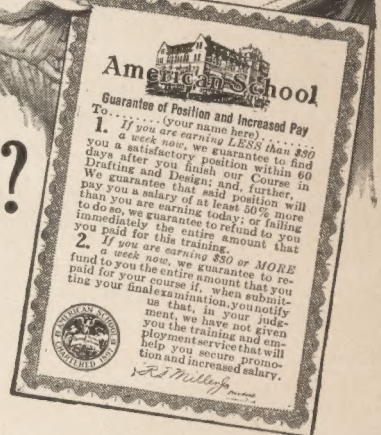
I want to tell you about DRAFTING, and show you that it offers you everything in pay and opportunity that you could hope for. I want to show you that a fine Drafting job is now easily within your reach. And I want to set before you an amazing plan which we have worked out with the co-operation of some of the biggest employers and engineers in America, to prepare you at home, in spare time, get you the job and raise your pay—absolutely without risk of a penny on your part.

Thousands of men—not a bit smarter than you, with no more schooling or experience have gone from poorly paid positions as clerks, mechanics, building trade workers and laborers into Drafting positions paying \$50.00 to \$100.00 a week, with our help. Now with a job and a raise waiting for you as soon as you are ready for it, all it takes is the COURAGE to go after it—now if you remain in the rut it's because you choose to, not because you have to.

Come Into DRAFTING!

I wish I had the room here to tell you all about DRAFTING—how it has become the most important branch of every kind of manufacturing and building construction work—how fascinating the work is—the fine bunch of fellows you'll work with—the big salaries paid—the wonderful chances for advancement. How, while Drafting is white-collar office work, it is hooked up closely with big projects and big men, and offers the thrill that goes with making plans which govern every move of the men who do the work. All this inside dope takes a 36 page book to describe and I'll be glad to send you a copy free when you mail the coupon for my no-risk job and raise plan.

O. C. MILLER, Director Extension Work.



3 Drafting Lessons Actually FREE

To Show You How Interesting and Simple DRAFTING Is

Maybe you think Drafting is "over your head"—that it takes artistic talent or some ability you haven't got. In that case you have a pleasant surprise coming to you. For I'll be glad to send you the first three lessons from our home-training to show you that the drawing of plans is purely mechanical, easily learned and the most interesting kind of work you ever tackled. It takes little enough courage to look into this wonderful opportunity—just mail the coupon and see for yourself how you like Drafting and our guaranteed way to get into it.



The American School,
Dept. DC-2, Drexel Ave. & 58th St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Please send without cost or obligation 3 Drafting Lessons, 36 page book with the inside dope about Drafting and your no-risk plan and guarantee to prepare me, to place me, to raise my pay or no cost.

Name.....

St. No.....

City.....State.....

Age.....Occupation.....

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

Dept. DC-2, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needsfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rate in The Munsey Combination comprising:

Munsey's Magazine	Combination Line Rate \$3.00 Less 2% cash discount
Argosy-Allstory Weekly	
Detective Fiction W'kly	
Minimum space 4 lines.	

Sept. 7th Classified Forms Close Aug. 10th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY — \$100 WEEKLY SELLING BETTER QUALITY, ALL-WOOL, union-made-to-measure suits and topcoats at \$23.50 and \$31.50. Build big repeat business. Liberal bonus for producers. Large swatch samples FREE. W. Z. GIBSON, INC., 500 Throop, Dept. H—499, Chicago.

BIGGEST PROFITS EVER OFFERED on quick selling, sure repeating toilet goods, food products and remedies. 200 items each needed daily in every home. Get FREE SAMPLE CASE OFFER. HO-RO-CO MFG. CO., Dept. 2704, St. Louis, Mo.

\$12.00 Daily Showing New Table Cloth. Looks like Linen. Wash like oilcloth. No Laundering. You just take orders. We deliver and collect. Pay daily. Write at once for Free Sample. BEESTEVEN, 641 Irving Park Station, Chicago.

MAKE YOUR OWN PRODUCTS. EMPLOY AGENTS YOURSELF. TOILET ARTICLES, SOAP, EXTRACTS. We furnish everything. Valuable book FREE. NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC LABORATORIES, 1961W Broad, Richmond, Va.

SOMETHING NEW. NO HOUSE TO HOUSE CANVASSING. A PROPOSITION IN WHICH YOU CAN BUILD UP REAL BUSINESS. NO INVESTMENT. BADGER CO., FT. ATKINSON, WIS.

Agents Earn \$72 Week. Bonus besides. Introduce finest line guaranteed hosiery you ever saw. Beats store prices. 126 styles, colors. Credit given. Samples furnished. Auto to producers. Write quick. Wilknit Hosiery Co., Dept. 3399, Greenfield, Ohio.

STRANGE BATTERY COMPOUND CHARGES BATTERIES INSTANTLY. GIVES NEW LIFE AND PEP. IMMENSE DEMAND. BIG PROFITS. LIGHTNING CO., ST. PAUL, MINN.

AGENTS WANTED—ON A FAST SELLING 25C ITEM FOR THE KITCHEN. COSTS YOU 8 1-3C. SAMPLE SENT PARCEL POST PREPAID FOR 10 CENTS. M. SEED FILTER MFG. CO., INC., 353 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. 150% PROFIT. SOAP'S, EXTRACTS, PERFUMES, TOILET GOODS. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. FREE SAMPLE CASE. AUTO FURNISHED. CARNATION CO., 140, ST. LOUIS, MO.

\$500 UP EARNED MONTHLY BY REAL SALESMEN AND DISTRIBUTORS SELLING QUALITY AUTO SERVICE STATION EQUIPMENT. LIBERAL PROPOSITION. NO INVESTMENT. REPEAT BUSINESS. CAMPBELL ADVERTISING INCORPORATED, DEPT. 809-B, TOLEDO, OHIO.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

\$6.00 DAILY EASY SELLING NEW TABLECLOTH. WASHES LIKE OILCLOTH. NO LAUNDERING. FREE OUTFIT. JONES, 802 N. CLARK, CHICAGO.

AUTOMOBILE PARTS

SAVE MONEY ON AUTO AND TRUCK REPAIRS. Gears, axles, bearings, motor and transmission parts at 50 to 75% off factory list prices. Satisfactory parts guaranteed. Prompt service. Price lists free. CENTURY PARTS CO., 1715 Lafayette Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

CAMERA AND PHOTO SUPPLIES

MAKE MONEY IN PHOTOGRAPHY. LEARN QUICKLY AT HOME. SPARE OR FULL TIME. NEW PLAN. Nothing like it. Experience unnecessary. AMERICAN SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY, Dept. 145-B, 5601 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

HELP AND INSTRUCTION

Government Jobs. \$1260 to \$3400 year. Men—women, 18—50. Steady work. Vacation. Common education usually sufficient. 25 coached FREE. Write for particulars immediately—today. FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. W-1, Rochester, N. Y.

HELP WANTED—MALE

FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN (WHITE OR COLORED), SLEEPING CAR, TRAIN PORTERS (COLORED), \$150—\$250 MONTHLY. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. 836 RAILWAY BUREAU, EAST ST. LOUIS, ILL.

HELP WANTED—FEMALE

WOMEN MAKE \$9 DAILY WEARING AND SHOWING NEW INVENTION. Prevents shoulder straps slipping. Real comfort at last! For Particulars—Free Offer, write LINGERIE "V" CO., 16 Lake, North Windham, Conn.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

MONEY MADE IN MICHIGAN POTATOES. \$10 DOWN NOW AND EASY TERMS BUYS LAND NEAR MARKETS, LAKES, STREAMS. WRITE TODAY. SWIGART & CO., M-601, 32 NO. STATE ST. BLDG., CHICAGO.

TOBACCO

TOBACCO HABIT BANISHED. NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM, no matter how strong your craving, no matter in what form you use tobacco, there is help for you. Just send postcard or letter for our Free Book. It explains everything. NEWELL PHARMACAL CO., Dept. 812, Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.

Tobacco Habit Cured or No Pay. Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Guaranteed. Harmless. Used by over 600,000 people. Full treatment sent on trial. Costs \$1.50 if it cures; nothing if it fails. Superba Co., N14, Baltimore, Md.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS—Write for our Free Guide Book, "How To Obtain A Patent" and Record of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description of Invention for Inspection and Advice Free. Reasonable Terms. Prompt Service. Highest References. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND ADVICE. WATSON E. COLEMAN, REGISTERED PATENT LAWYER, 724 NINTH STREET, WASHINGTON, D. C.

INVENTORS—WRITE FOR OUR GUIDE BOOK, "How to Get Your Patent," and evidence of Invention blank. Send model or sketch for Inspection and Instructions Free. Terms reasonable. RANDOLPH & CO., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS PROCURED; TRADE MARKS REGISTERED—Preliminary advice furnished without charge. Booklet and form for disclosing idea free. IRVING L. MCCATHRAN, 703D International Building, Washington, D. C.

INVENTORS: WE HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS 30 YEARS. IF YOUR INVENTION OR PATENT HAS MERIT, SEND DETAILS OR MODEL, OR WRITE, ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249 ENRIGHT, ST. LOUIS, MO.

Relief from the Kurse of Konstipation

Rexall Orderlies attract water from system into colon—soften dry, hard food waste—flush it out of body in easy, natural elimination. Rexall Orderlies are sold only at Rexall Stores. 24 for 25c, 60 for 50c, 150 for \$1. Save with safety at your



Rexall

DRUG STORE

There is one near you. You will recognize it by this sign. Liggett's are also Rexall Stores.



BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Earn Up to \$250 Per Month
Expenses Paid



NO HUNTING FOR A POSITION Trained men needed in this important position. Fascinating work; plenty of variety; chances to travel. Advancement rapid with experience. Report to high officials. We assist you to a position upon graduation paying from \$150 to \$185 a month and expenses, or refund your money. Prepare in 3 mos. spare time home study. Cost moderate. Send for free booklet today.

Standard Business Training Inst., Div. 50, Buffalo, N. Y.



**21 BEAUTIFUL
CARDS 100
IN BOX - 1**

\$50 a Week
for your spare hours!

Make money easily, quickly with Jane Morden Box Assortments. Sell 21 beautiful greeting cards, with fancy envelopes for only \$1. World's greatest Christmas card value; actual worth \$2.50. Show beautiful sample we send you—your friends and neighbors will buy like "hot cakes."

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED

Just an hour or two a day pays you \$50 weekly. Make up to \$125 weekly for full time. Customers Buying Now—get started at once. Write Jane Morden Studios, Dept. 108, 1 Commercial St., Rochester, N. Y.

AVIATION Information **FREE**

Send us your name and address for full information regarding the Aviation and Airplane business. Find out about the many great opportunities now open and how we prepare you at home, during spare time, to qualify. Our new book, *Opportunities in the Airplane Industry*, also sent free if you answer at once.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF AVIATION
Dept. 165-C 3601 Michigan Ave. CHICAGO

Writing

a source of income that many people neglect

MANY people who *should* be writing never even try it because they just can't picture themselves making "big money." They are so awe-struck by the fabulous stories about millionaire authors that they overlook the fact that \$25, \$50 and \$100 or more can often be earned for material that takes little time to write—stories, articles on home or business management, sports, travels, recipes, etc.—things that can be easily and naturally written, in spare time.

Mr. F. J. Wade, Box 505, Sullivan, Mo., is but one of many men and women trained by the Newspaper Institute of America to make their gift for writing pay prompt dividends. He writes:



"After only a few months of training, I am in receipt of two checks so far this month. One was for an article for the *American Machinist*—the other was for a humorous story in the *American Merchant Magazine*."

You, too, can learn to write! How? By WRITING!

The Newspaper Institute of America offers an intimate course in practical writing—a course as free from academic "isms" and "ologies" as a newspaper office—a course as modern as the latest edition of this morning's paper.

Week by week, you receive actual assignments—just as if you were right at work on a great metropolitan daily. Your writing is *individually* corrected and constructively criticized. A group of men with 182 years of newspaper experience behind them are responsible for this instruction. Under such sympathetic guidance, you will find that (instead of vainly trying to copy some one else's writing tricks) you are rapidly developing your own distinctive, self-flavored style. You are learning to write by writing—acquiring the same experience to which nearly all well-known writers of short-stories, novels, magazine articles, etc., attribute their success.

How You Start

To insure prospective student-members against wasting their time and money, we have prepared a unique Writing Aptitude Test. This tells you whether you possess the fundamental qualities necessary to successful writing—acute observation, dramatic instinct, creative imagination, etc. You'll enjoy this test. Newspaper Institute of America, 1776 Broadway, New York.

NEWSPAPER INSTITUTE OF AMERICA
1776 Broadway New York

Send me your free *Writing Aptitude Test* and further information on writing for profit.

Mr. {
Mrs. {
Miss {

Address.....

(All correspondence confidential. No salesmen will call on you.) 67H-269

Must Men Fear 40?

Medical authorities agree that 65% of all men past middle age (many much younger) are afflicted with a disorder of the prostate gland. Aches in feet, legs and back, frequent nightly risings, sciatic pains are some of the signs—and now a well-known American Scientist has written a remarkably interesting Free Book that tells of other symptoms and just what they mean. No longer should a man approaching or past the prime of life be content to regard these pains and conditions as inevitable signs of approaching age. Already more than 50,000 men have used the amazing method described in this book. If you will mail your request to the concern that is distributing this book for the author, it will be sent to you absolutely FREE, without obligation. Simply send name and address. But don't delay, for the edition of this book is limited.—The Electro Thermal Company, 3020 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio. Western address—Dept. 30-W, 303 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif.



TRAVEL FOR "UNCLE SAM"

\$158 to \$225 MONTH, Railway Postal Clerks. Become Mail Carriers—Post-office Clerks. Make more in 15 up. Common education sufficient. Write IMMEDIATELY for free 32-page book with list of U. S. Gov't. positions now open to men and women.
FRANKLIN INSTITUTE Dept. W-290 ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Own Your Own Big Money-Making Business

A delightful, dignified and fascinating business. Make and sell Crispettes. Delicious confection. Everybody loves them. Can't get enough. Come again and again for more. Easy to make. Easy to sell. I supply everything. Raw material cheap. Profits big. No limit to sales. QUICK SUCCESS POSSIBLE anywhere—cities, towns, villages. Amazing market—crowded streets; surging throngs at parks, carnivals, fairs, etc.; open a little retail store; or, begin at home; wholesale to stores, grocers, bakers, druggists, parks, baseball games, picnics, fairs, wayside stands. Start now. PHENOMENAL PROFITS \$11,265 sales in 3 months reported by California man. New Jersey \$4000 profits in less than 2 months. Revel of Michigan wrote: "Made \$25 on my first day". A. Leib of Montreal wrote: "My sales averaged \$400 per week". WE START YOU IN BUSINESS Supply machines, secret formulas, and raw material. No experience needed. Little capital starts you on road to phenomenal earnings. Liberal terms. WRITE FOR "BOOK OF FACTS"—It's free, contains success letters from others—shows their places of business, tells how to start.

Eakins Co., 811 High St., Springfield, O.
Mail at once, your Book of Facts.
Name _____
Address _____



DU-TEX THE NEW WONDER TABLE CLOTH

New \$10,000,000 a year Market SHARE ITS PROFITS

FOUND GOLD! UNDER-SELLS AND OUT-SELLS ALL OTHERS STAINS RUB RIGHT OUT LOOKS LIKE REAL IRISH LINEN NEEDS NO LAUNDERING SAMPLES

AGENTS—Cash in Now! Highest daily Commissions. Lowest Prices. De-luxe Samples Free. Take orders for DU-TEX, the Genuine, Forever Immaculate, Linen-like Tablecloth. Nationwide Demand. Sells on Sight. All colors, all sizes. Wonderful opportunity. Mail coupon.

COUPON

DU-TEX CO., 116 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK
Send me Free Samples of DU-TEX Tablecloths.

Name _____ 44-N

Address _____

FREE... Mail Coupon At Once!

Your Life Story Revealed In Your Handwriting

See yourself as others see you. Lay aside your doubts and skepticism. 30,000 readers astonished with accuracy of John Fraser's Graphological analyses of human character. Given to you absolutely without cost.

Graphology is a true revealer of human character and Mr. Fraser has the power and ability to disclose to you your traits, habits, virtues and foibles from a sample of your penmanship, with utmost exactness.

Obtainable only through this magazine. 10¢ per copy (15¢ in Canada) on all newsstands.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

"The magazine with the detective shield on the cover."

BEAUTIFUL NEW SKIN in 3 Days



WONDERFUL! AMAZING!

Rid yourself definitely of
Pimples — Blackheads — En-
larged Pores — Oily Skin —
Wrinkles — Tan — Freckles
— Unsightly Blemishes

Amazing German dis-
covery. You
can have a
new, soft, vel-
vety, clear,
youth-like skin.
Write for our free book,
"Beautiful New Skin
in 3 Days!" Hurry—edi-
tion limited. Send only
your name and address.
MARVO, Inc., 1700 BROADWAY
Dept. 163-N NEW YORK CITY



A PERFECT
COMPLEXION
IS YOURS
in 3 DAYS



FREE BOOK

Your Opportunity!

Show our all-wool union-made tailored-
to-measure suits and take orders. Col-
lect your big profits daily besides liberal
extra bonus. Largest commissions in
field. Supreme values—smartest styles.
Makes order-taking easy.
FREE OUTFIT—Nearly 200 large
swatches; complete instructions.
Reserve territory, no money or ex-
perience required. **Pioneer Tailor-
ing Co., Congress and Throop
Sts., Dept. H-1003, Chicago, Ill.**

Sell
ALL-WOOL
Suits
\$25.00



Make
\$95.00
Weekly

SONGWRITERS

SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES
ARE PAID on publisher's acceptance. Write for
Free Booklet on developing ideas for song words or
music required by Talking Pictures.
NEWCOMER ASSOCIATES, 1674 B'way, N.Y.

TREATING DIABETES

by diet alone is merely treating symptoms and not the disease. Nat-
urally if no sugar is taken into the system there will be none to
excrete. My book

'EAT TO GET WELL'

telling how to stop useless starving and gradually eat what you
need will be sent FREE to any diabetic sufferer. Write M. Richards,
Dept. 718, 220 W. 42d St., New York.

NO JOKE TO BE DEAF

—EVERY DEAF PERSON KNOWS THAT



I make myself hear, after being deaf for 25 years, with
these Artificial Ear Drums. I wear
them day and night. They stop
head noises and ringing ears. They
are perfectly comfortable. No one
sees them. Write me and I will tell
you a true story, how I got deaf and
how I make you hear. Address



Medicated Ear Drum

GEO. P. WAY, Artificial Ear Drum Co. (Inc.),
39 Hoffman Bldg. Detroit, Mich.

When you start a serial in the Argosy-Allstory
you only wait a week to go on with it. Start one
this week, and you'll buy every number until it's
concluded. On sale at all news-stands.



"Well, Jack,
there's our future and our fortune!"

Said Ruth to Jack: "If half of what I hear
from Mabel and Nell is correct, as to what their
husbands have made from the Fashion Kraft
proposition, I know you'll soon have an income
big enough to pay off our home or buy a smart
new car or send the children through school."

"I saw both their bank books and those girls
have deposited more within the last month
than I have in a year. The whole thing looks
mighty good to me—let's write and find out
more about it."

All this was a year ago—Jack, who had had no
experience taking measurements, *did write*, and
today he is a real producer for himself and
Ruth, selling popular-priced tailored clothes.
He calls on friends, neighbors, men in all walks
of life, shows them his fine woolsens, takes their
orders for made-to-measure clothes, receives a
substantial CASH commission then and there.
YOU can do the same; we will give you proper
instructions. Why not write today, without
obligation? The outfits are valuable, but will
be sent free to responsible parties only.

THE FASHION KRAFT CO.

Dept. A. Fifth & Elm Sts. CINCINNATI

factory prices!

on Nationally Popular
21-JEWEL—Thin Model

STUDEBAKER

The Insured Watch

The only high-grade watch
sold direct from factory!

Imagine being able to pur-
chase these magnificent thin
model watches at lowest
factory prices on easy pay-
ments out of your income, or
for cash! Let us send you one
of these marvelous watches
—you are under no obligation
to keep it. You'll agree it is
the world's greatest watch
value. Write for free 6-color
book and learn the true facts!



FREE 6-Color Book

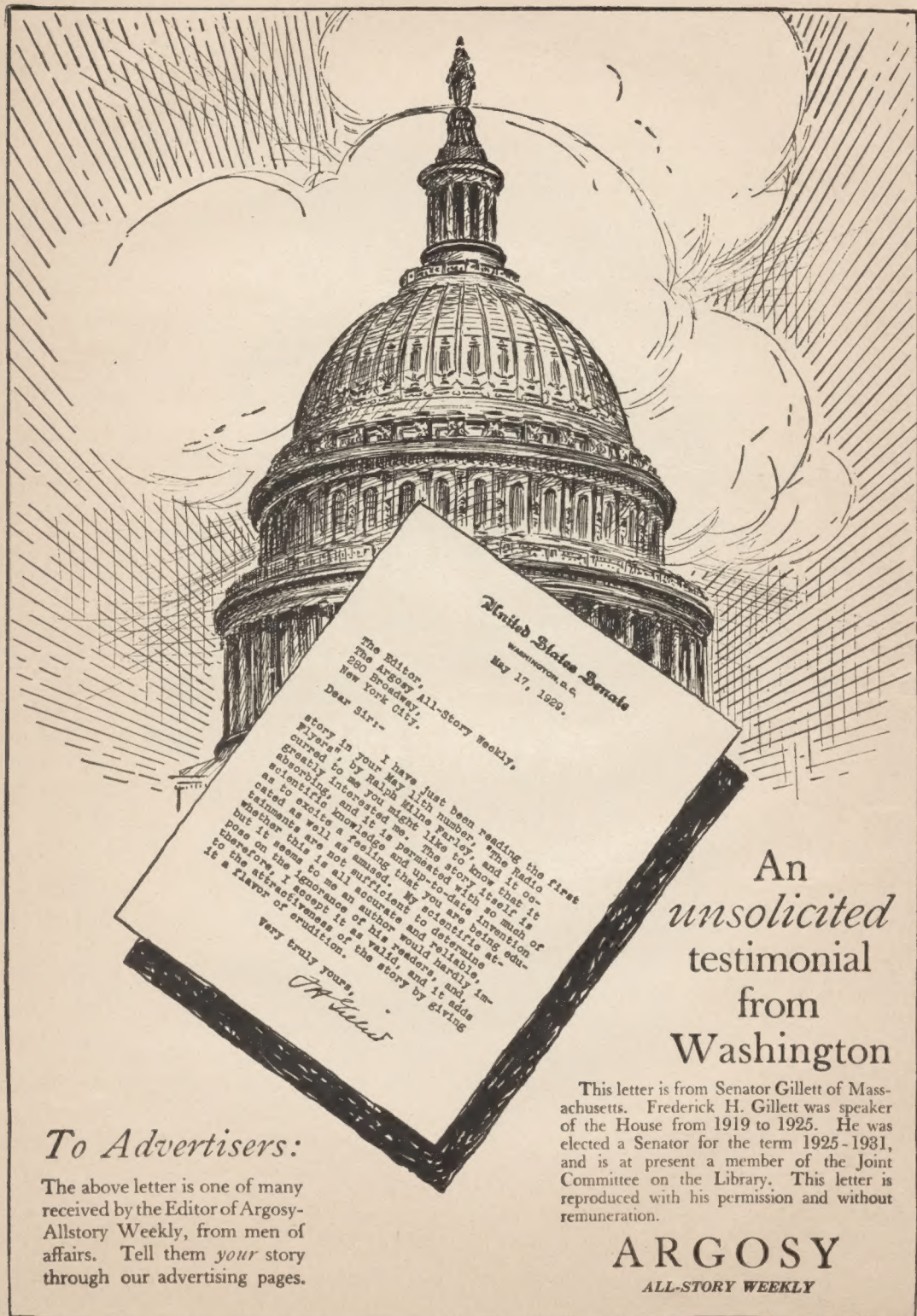
If you write at once we will
send beautiful style book,
showing lowest factory prices
on these lifetime insured
watches. Thousands save
money this way. Write today!

WRITE!

Luxurious strap and bracelet
watches at remarkably low
prices! Write for free style
book TODAY!

STUDEBAKER WATCH COMPANY

Directed by the Studenaker Family—known for
Three-quarters of a century of fair dealing
Dept. N.O.7 South Bend, Indiana
Canadian Address: Windsor, Ont.



United States Senate
Washington, D.C.
May 17, 1929.

The Editor,
The Argosy-Allstory Weekly,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

Dear Sir:-

I have just been reading the first story in your May 11th number, "The Radio Inventor", by Ralph Kline Parley, and it occurred to me you might like to know that it is absolutely interesting and up-to-date so much of scientific knowledge and it is. The story is invented as to exciting knowledge and scientific being educated as well as amusing. My you are reliable, whether this is not an accurate scientific education but it seems to me an accurate scientific education. I am not amused, and it adds to the attractiveness of his readers, and it adds to the attractiveness of the story by giving it a flavor of erudition.

Very truly yours,
F. H. Gillett

An unsolicited testimonial from Washington

This letter is from Senator Gillett of Massachusetts. Frederick H. Gillett was speaker of the House from 1919 to 1925. He was elected a Senator for the term 1925-1931, and is at present a member of the Joint Committee on the Library. This letter is reproduced with his permission and without remuneration.

ARGOSY
ALL-STORY WEEKLY

To Advertisers:

The above letter is one of many received by the Editor of Argosy-Allstory Weekly, from men of affairs. Tell them *your* story through our advertising pages.



This famous doctor's prescription relieves gastric distress heartburn acid stomach

AFTER a hearty meal—agony, distress? Thousands have learned that Pepto-Bismol brings quick, pleasant relief from indigestion, sour, acid stomach, heartburn and gastric fermentation. Pleasantly flavored, it soothes the delicate stomach lining. Whenever your stomach is upset, take a teaspoonful of Pepto-Bismol, repeat every half hour until completely relieved. At your druggist's—50¢. The Norwich Pharmacal Co., Norwich, N. Y.



Recommended by doctors for children because of its mild action

Pepto-Bismol

How's \$10.00 a Day EVERYDAY till Xmas

B. Lelli does it. Frank Cantwell averaged \$15.00 every working day. Hundreds now selling Cambridge "Exquisite" Xmas Greeting Cards earning this amount. No experience necessary.

Everybody Buys Greeting Cards

Friends, relatives, neighbors, merchants all your customers. The Cambridge Line includes 70 beautiful designs, gorgeous colorings, steel engravings, hand etchings, and magnificent envelopes. Customers may have verses transferred FREE!

FREE \$10.00 outfit

ACT! Full or spare time. Just show these "Exquisite" samples—write orders. No bother. We deliver and collect. Commissions daily. Liberal bonuses. Send for FREE Outfit. Start today.

CAMBRIDGE PRESS, INC.
Dept. 157 230 W. Huron St. Chicago, Ill.

See your Dentist every six months use FORHAN'S daily

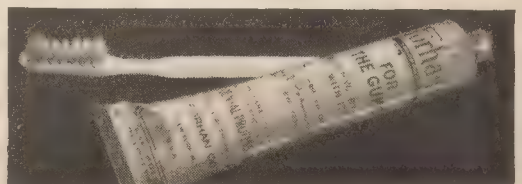
Only care can protect you from the foe that ravages health, spoils beauty and feasts on youth. Forgetful and perhaps deceived by white teeth, 4 persons out of 5 after forty and thousands younger pay its high toll. And when Pyorrhea is once contracted only the most expert dental care can stem its advance. So follow this regime:

See your dentist every six months. And every morning and night when you brush your teeth, brush gums vigorously. But be certain to use the dentifrice made for the purpose . . . Forhan's for the Gums.

A few days of faithful brushing will prove its worth to you. You'll be delighted the way your gums look and feel. Forhan's helps to firm gums, keep them sound, thus warding off such dread diseases as Pyorrhea. In addition it cleans teeth and helps to protect them from decay. Get a tube of Forhan's from your druggist, today, 35c and 60c.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company, New York

Forhan's for the gums



YOUR TEETH ARE ONLY AS HEALTHY AS YOUR GUMS

Read This Story in August Munsey, Now On Sale

*"Girls are foolish, I suppose, but that's the
way God made us."*

TWO WOMEN WANTED CHIC COTTON. AND HE PLAYED AROUND WITH
BOTH OF THEM UNTIL—SOMETHING HAPPENED!

Charmian—with a background of wealth and culture.
Queenie—the shapely, alluring tight-rope queen of

CONEY ISLAND

A new novel by the man who wrote "West of the Water Tower,"
"They Had to See Paris," etc.—

HOMER CROY

IT WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH, MAKE YOU CRY. ALL THE GLAMOUR,
ROMANCE, AND THE SINISTER UNDERCURRENTS OF THE WORLD'S
GREATEST AMUSEMENT PARK REVEALED IN HOMER CROY'S
"CONEY ISLAND," BEGINNING IN THE AUGUST ISSUE OF

MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

NOW ON SALE

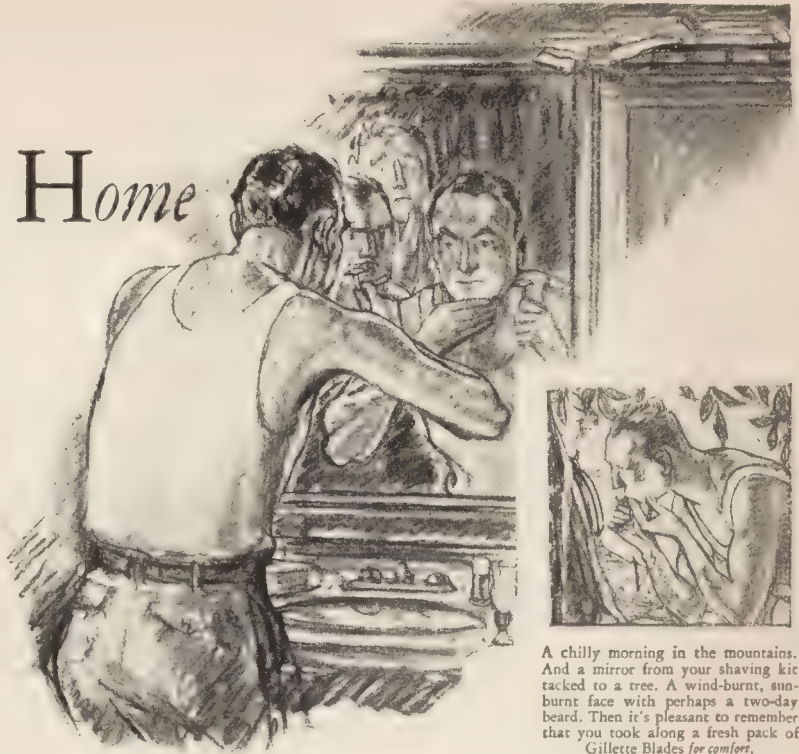
25 cents at all news-stands

(In Canada, 30 cents)

Away from Home



Here you are in your *own* bathroom. A place for everything, and everything in its place. Hot water always, a good mirror, and a fresh package of Gillette Blades on the shelf. Then it's easy to get your full measure of comfort.



A chilly morning in the mountains. And a mirror from your shaving kit tacked to a tree. A wind-burnt, sun-burnt face with perhaps a two-day beard. Then it's pleasant to remember that you took along a fresh pack of Gillette Blades for comfort.

... you can't expect as smooth a shave

WHETHER you shave quietly and luxuriously at home; or strenuously, over the shoulders of other harassed travelers in a Pullman washroom; or primitively in camp, with the cold lake for your wash basin—no matter how different the shaving conditions may be—put a fresh Gillette Blade in your holder and you're sure of a smooth, comfortable shave.

Your guarantee of this unchanging comfort is the careful honing, the delicate stropping that Gillette's marvelous machines give every blade. No human hand, however expert, however patient or tireless, could ever work such comfort into a blade.

And Gillette goes one step further. It sets aside almost half of all its

But you can count on your Gillette Blade to give you a comfortable shave anywhere

blade department workers to do nothing but inspect your blades—and rewards with a bonus the end-

less search for any blade that may be below par.

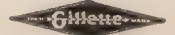
You see, eight out of ten men in America shave with a Gillette and expect every Gillette Blade to do its duty. So every blade *has* to be good, no matter how difficult the conditions it goes up against—hard water, cold water, tough beards, tender skins, slapdash lather—a dozen varying conditions that affect the comfort of your shave. Conditions change—the blade doesn't. That's why you can always slip a fresh Gillette Blade in your razor and enjoy a swift, sure shave wherever you are. Gillette Safety Razor Co., Boston, U. S. A.

King Gillette



THE only individual in history, ancient or modern, whose picture and signature are found in every city and town, in every country in the world, is King C. Gillette. This picture and signature are universal sign-language for a perfect shave.

Gillette





Splash in!

Old man Sun! When he's got you nearly to the melting point, you can still laugh—and splash back at him!

Where? In your tub, of course, that's filled to the brim with coolness as fresh as a clear mountain pool.

Blissfully submerged . . . that will be you. Blithely afloat—that's sure to be Ivory! And when your wilted spirits have completely revived, the friend of millions of American

bathers will demonstrate anew its genius for quick-rinsing foam!

Splash! There goes the last Ivory bubble away. Cleared of perspiration, the skin seems to breathe gratefully. And even if the shoulders and arms are blushing with sunburn, they have nothing to fear from Ivory's refreshing foam. Isn't Ivory safe even for a baby's peach-blossom skin?

Old man Sun, here's a person who's serene and happy at the climax of your hot summer day!

. . . kind to everything it touches · 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀ % Pure · "It floats"



DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



VOLUME XLIII

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 1929

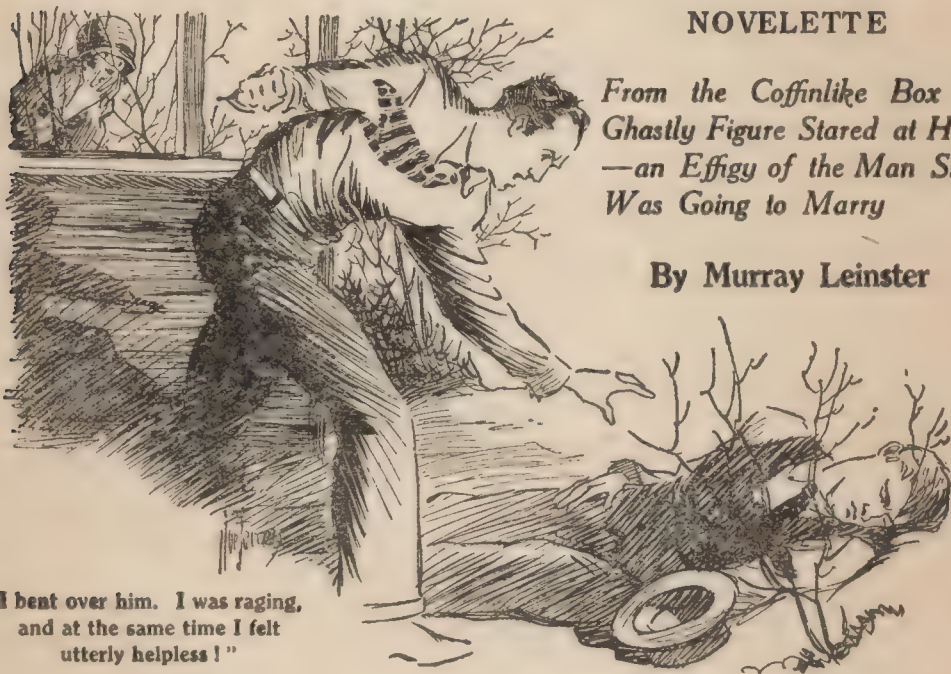
NUMBER 3

The Murdered Wax Figure

NOVELETTE

*From the Coffinlike Box a
Ghastly Figure Stared at Her
—an Effigy of the Man She
Was Going to Marry*

By Murray Leinster



"I bent over him. I was raging,
and at the same time I felt
utterly helpless!"

"LET'S get out of here," said Deering gloomily, when some one at the piano started to sing. "I'll stand a lot for you, Hal, but not singing."

"Into the smoking room then," agreed Walker. He looked over the group of guests with a troubled face. "I wanted to talk to you, anyway."

There were two or three stout and prominent citizens and a sprinkling of younger men in the room they had to

cross, and girls with the fresh complexions of a very small city and the sophisticated clothes of habitual shoppers-in-town. Besides these, of course, there was the usual assortment of dowagers and first-inhabitants that will be found at any social gathering in a place the size of Keensburg, Delaware.

Walker led the way through the big hall of Judge Hill's home. On the way they passed a spectacled, heavily-built man with a doctor's Vandyke

beard, smiling as he talked to Alice Hill. She nodded to Walker as he passed, giving him a little flickering smile.

"In here," said Walker, pausing at a tall, wide open door. "Cigars in the humidor. Matches on the smoking stand. The judge will want you to be comfortable."

Deering seated himself with a sigh of relief, while Walker moved jerkily to the mantel, against which he leaned while he stared somberly into the flames that burned in the grate despite the warm weather. Deering looked at him meditatively, then fished in the pockets of his immaculate evening clothes and extracted a disreputable pipe, blackened by use and of deadly strength. He filled it and lighted up, then sat back in the chair contentedly.

"My Lord, Hal!" he observed. "The whirl of society in these small towns is too much for a mere New Yorker. Why, I've only been here two hours, and I am already bored stiff at a party, with railroad cinders barely out of my collar and railroad soot still fast in my throat. Will it be like this the whole time I'm here?"

"Hardly," said Walker. He looked surprisingly wretched, if you looked at him closely. He even looked a trifle hunted, or as if he were close to desperation.

Deering eyed him keenly.

"What's bothering you, Hal? Your wire said for me to come if it was humanly possible. Naturally, I chucked everything and came."

"I think," said Walker abruptly, "that you'd better just go on back, Tom. Something came up after I'd sent the wire that makes your presence pretty well useless. If I'd called on you sooner, it would be different. But you're too late."

Deering puffed meditatively, looking up from time to time to study Walker's face. At last he said slowly:

"I don't think I'll go back, Hal. You're in trouble, and we've always been pretty good friends. If you needed a detective in the first place, you probably need one now. Can you tell me anything at all about your difficulty?"

"The difficulty," said Walker, with sudden grimness, "is that I shall very probably kill a man to-night. Now—hadn't you better go back?"

Deering shook his head imperturbably.

"It's less desirable than ever. I'd better stick around and detect a way for you to get away with it. Spill it, Hal."

Walker made a helpless gesture.

"You must think me crazy, Tom. But I've been blackmailed for eighteen months—bled white, and I've come to the end of things. To-night, unless an utterly impossible demand is acceded to, there will be hell to pay, at this party. And if I can only identify the blackmailer before he can make the revelations he threatens, I shall shoot him dead. I didn't plan this before. When I wired you, I thought you could find him for me in time. Now it's too late."

Deering took his pipe out of his mouth and adjusted the stem to a precise angle.

"My dear chap, it isn't too late. And murder, of course, is horribly mussy. You mustn't do it. If not on your own account, at least on Miss Hill's, you ought to do everything possible to avoid it."

Walker whirled sharply, his eyes staring.

"Miss Hill! How the devil did you know—"

"I saw you looking at each other,"

said Deering mildly. "You are in love with each other, and you are both in torment. You have your faces very well controlled, but your eyes are not so guarded. Of course, Miss Hill is involved in the affair."

Walker was trembling.

"Look here, Tom! If Miss Hill is concerned, it is on my account. I tell you frankly, I love her. But I haven't the ghost of a chance to marry her. She's engaged to some one else. You must leave her out of this matter."

Deering smiled whimsically at the tense figure of his friend. His drawling voice, when he spoke, was admirably calculated to let down the strain from which Walker was suffering.

"I haven't run a criminal investigation bureau for nothing, Hal," he said, smiling. "I got into town, tired, and thirsty, and dusty, with cinders in my hair and engine-oil and coal-smoke scenting up my clothes. You rushed me to your place and bade me bathe and shave and change, on account of a party. And you refused to talk about your telegram. Of course, you wanted me to see something or be seen by some one. Of course, it was a woman, because if you'd wanted a man's opinion of me you'd have had him at your place. And also, of course, it was Miss Hill."

Walker flung his hands out in a gesture of pure desperation.

"Of course, you're right," he said helplessly, "but—you simply can't help. I knew that as soon as we'd got here. I was a fool to bring you."

"You're a fool, old chap," said Deering softly, "if you don't realize that I picked the gun from your hip pocket as soon as I saw your eyes get unpleasantly resolved."

Walker's hand moved to his hip, and came away empty.

"Give it to me!" he demanded fiercely. "You don't know what you're doing! I've got to kill him!"

"A blackmailer," protested Deering, "is always more vulnerable than his victims. If he weren't in fear of having something told on him, he'd never think of threatening to tell on some one else. If any one starts to make any revelations to-night, either you or I will hit him forcibly on the point of the jaw. Then we will tell some pleasant lie about our motive for doing so, and take him away with us. And then we will argue with him. You know, I have a force of operatives in my business. We can look him up, at any rate, before we let him go. We may silence him by pointing out that we can make him more uncomfortable in jail than he can make you out of it. In any event, we will gain time. Who is this blackmailer, anyway?"

"I don't know! I don't know!"

"Then we'll have to find him before he starts to talk. He will make his revelation by word of mouth, won't he?"

"I don't know. He's always telephoned. But he may be any one in the house to-night."

"Offhand, there's one precaution that occurs to me. Just a moment."

Deering rose and slipped from the room. He was gone hardly half a minute before he returned.

"He won't telephone, at any rate. I jammed it. And it will take a trouble man to find out what's the matter. You unscrew the receiver-cap, Hal, and take out the diaphragm. Then all you have to do is cut a wire the size of a sewing thread with your pocket knife. Simple, isn't it?"

Walker was pacing up and down the place, his face white. He turned.

"Give me back the gun, Tom. If

you can find the man before he can start anything—”

Deering passed back the weapon.

“Now you’re showing sense. Tell me about the chap. What has he to disclose?”

“I’d rather you didn’t know,” said Walker constrainedly.

Deering nodded.

“I expected as much. What does he demand of Miss Hill?”

Walker stared.

“Damn you, Tom!” he cried wildly. “Are you a mind reader?”

“Of course, not.” Deering waved his hand irritably. “I can’t help noticing things. I shall very probably discover the skeleton in your closet, possibly two or three skeletons in as many closets, and a whole cemetery in your coal cellar. But I shan’t tell on you. You dragged me out of a river once, when I was twelve years old. You put a boat-hook in the seat of my pants and saved my life. It is high time that great debt was repaid.”

He knocked the tobacco out of his pipe and began to fill it again, without delay.

“What about this fiancé of Miss Hill’s? Where is he?”

“God knows! He disappeared two years ago—vanished utterly. They don’t even know whether he’s living or dead. She’s still engaged to him because there is some silly business about a will. She loses a fortune if she marries any one but him, unless he dies first. The same thing applies to him.”

“What sort of person was he?”

“A rotter! The worst kind of a cad. If he’s dead, it’s good riddance.”

“Good.” Deering scratched a match and lit his pipe. He made a curious picture, sitting there. His lean, good-natured face above immaculate evening clothes was well enough, but the stubby

and wholly unpresentable pipe he was smoking was in odd contrast to the rest of his appearance. “I gather,” he said when the pipe was going comfortably, “that either some one will try to telephone and fail, or send a note to be read by some one—”

“That would mean absolutely any one here,” said Walker grimly. “His disclosure of what he threatens to tell would be ample if told to any living human being in the town. That one would tell all the rest.”

“Or he might appear in person to ruin you because Miss Hill refused to sacrifice herself to save you,” Deering finished.

Walker jumped, then composed himself with an effort.

“He might be here at the moment,” he pointed out grimly.

Deering puffed half a dozen times with his head on one side.

“This will do for the present, then,” he said thoughtfully. “The big thing is to prevent a person unknown from making an unknown statement to some other unknown person. That looks like a big order. We’ll have to trust to the luck of the Irish. But anyhow, hit first, hit hard, and don’t shoot. I wish you’d tell me what the bad news would be. He might get it half out, or all the way, before I recognized it.”

Walker struggled with himself.

“I—I can’t tell you, Tom.”

“I ought to throw up the case,” agreed Deering, “only I won’t. Instead, if I see any one’s eyes begin to look as if he were saying something very unpleasant, I shall land on his jaw.” He stood up. “But—more especially,” he said comfortably, “if any one starts to say three names and a fact together—”

He was out of the doorway before Walker gathered himself together.

"If it's you," he cried fiercely, though in an undertone, "I swear I'll kill you, Tom!"

Deering grinned over his shoulder.

"I rattled a skeleton, eh? But I promised not to tell, old chap. And you're quite too decent to do anything worth blackmailing you for. I don't believe it."

II

WALKER'S hand, clutching, slipped from his sleeve, and he was in the drawing-room with the rest of the party before Walker had caught up with him again. He was, in fact, observing mildly to Dr. Hollenden:

"Doctor, when strangers find themselves bored they at least have a refuge. Tell me. Do you think prohibition is ever coming back?"

And Dr. Hollenden laughed.

"Isn't young Walker over there distressed because of it? He looks as if he needs a drink, and badly."

Deering inspected his friend with a certain detachment.

"I don't know whether it's that, or whether he's in love," he said meditatively. "Love is like drink. It makes some people stupid, and others quarrelsome."

The doctor's whole bulk shook as he chuckled, and Deering strolled wearily to the side of the room. From a seat beside a window he could survey the whole scene. For some minutes he looked on without especial interest, but there was not, as a matter of fact, any smallest item that escaped his notice.

There was a buzz of talk all over the room. Two young men competed for the attention of a girl at the piano. Two bobbed-haired girls giggled with one young man. A card table had been set up over in one corner and four

elderly people solemnly played auction bridge. There were small groups of guests talking, or laughing, or listening. From an adjoining room came the sound of a victrola, and an occasional dancing couple could be seen through the archway as they flashed past. It was an entirely informal gathering, and by the same token an entirely enjoyable one. Alice Hill moved from one group to another. Her aunt—Deering remembered vaguely that Walker had said some time during the evening that her parents were dead—her aunt languidly waved a fan as she sat enthroned upon a settee, the very picture of a white-haired, plump dowager of certain and definite convictions as to how other people should order their lives. Her husband, Judge Hill, likewise had the stern look of one who must be obeyed at all costs, yet unbent among the people in his home with the air of one who will be genial even if it pains him.

The people present, as Deering reflected, were undoubtedly the aristocracy of the very small town. They were enjoying themselves wholeheartedly and quite simply, and it was ridiculous to suspect any of them of any design to ruin any man's life before the evening was over. Privately, Deering suspected that more than one life would be disclosed as wreckage within the next hour or two, but his meditations were interrupted.

Alice Hill stopped before him.

"Are you so much bored, Mr. Deering?"

"Certainly not now," said Deering lightly. "I just had a talk with Hal—Hal Walker, you know—and he bored me to extinction."

Alice's face grew very serious, and her eyes became pleading.

"Can't you help him? Please? I've

heard of you. They say you are a great detective—”

“That I walk on the scene of a crime,” scoffed Deering, “tap a few walls, say ‘Ha!’ very sternly and then point out the man who stole the cat’s pyjamas.”

She smiled faintly, but was deadly serious again.

“It is serious, Mr. Deering. At any moment—”

Deering bent forward as if to see a dancing couple through the archway in the next room.

“There are four people who *might* be listening, Miss Hill,” he said in a low tone.

She shivered slightly.

“It—it might be any one,” she whispered fearfully.

Deering leaned back against the wall, smiling as if at something he had seen or heard.

“I think,” he commented softly, “the—even will come from outside. I’ve smashed the telephone. He can’t phone in. Are all these people your friends?”

“Yes.”

“I’m most interested in staving off anything unpleasant to-night. Tomorrow we’ll start to work. Beg Hal to confide in me. I’m horribly hampered, working in the dark.”

“It is worse to suffer in the dark, not knowing who—”

Sheer, haunting terror shone in her eyes for an instant, terror of something more than mere loss of fortune or wealth. It was a vastly more horrifying thing that faced her. Whatever the blackmailer had demanded, it was not only money, in her estimation.

There was a roaring in the street outside. A motor car had stopped and was backing up against the curb. Deering frowned, and his eyes darted across

to Walker. Walker had turned suddenly pale.

“What’s that outside?” asked Deering quietly.

“It—it may not be anything,” said Alice, uncertainly. “We’re so frightened, Hal and I. This is my birthday. It may be a—a present.”

“Let’s go to the door,” said Deering.

He gave Alice a glance of purest approval as she went with him. She was a trifle pale, but she was walking naturally and once she even paused to make some smiling comment.

Walker reached the hall at about the same instant they did. A servant was just supervising some mysterious transaction outside. Alice went to the open door.

“If this is—it,” whispered Walker hoarsely, “I’ll kill the man if I can’t stop it.”

“On the contrary, if it’s a man, we’ll hit him, and if it’s a note, we’ll suppress it.”

Alice turned, laughing suddenly, her face radiant with relief and her voice even a trifle unsteady from the reaction from her fear.

“It’s only a present, Hal! Some one has sent a huge box as a present! What can it be?”

A truckman staggered in the doorway, a monster box balanced in his arms. He let it down with a grunt of relief. Walker slipped something in his hand, he grinned, and vanished.

Half a dozen people came out into the hall, some laughing. Judge Hill was among them.

“I’m trying to think what it can be!” protested Alice, to a babel of questions. “It has my name on it.”

“The answer,” a jovial voice proclaimed, “is to open it.”

Dr. Hollenden shouldered his way to the front, beaming.

"Have some one get a hatchet, Alice," he directed. "You've been presented with a house and lot, delivered by express."

A servant slipped away and returned. Walker, almost tremulous with relief, slipped the blade under one of the planks of the top and pried it up. A mass of excelsior appeared. He pried up a second board, while those about the box peered forward to get the first glimpse of the present arriving so appropriately in the middle of a birthday party.

A third board, and a fourth came up. Walker seized the excelsior that covered the contents.

"Good God!" boomed the doctor suddenly. "Get the women away! Get them away!"

Walker started upright, and the packing lifted with his hands. Deering saw the contents of the box and started. His lips pursed as if he were about to whistle in amazement. And then he moved quickly. He caught Alice Hill just as she fainted without a sound.

One woman screamed loudly and shrilly. At least two of the men gave back in involuntary horror. Then, without shame, they bolted. In a matter of seconds the hallway was deserted save for the doctor, and Walker, Judge Hill, and Deering with Alice unconscious in his arms.

Judge Hill was shaken and ashen. He struggled to speak. Dr. Hollenden stared into the open box. From the room in which most of the guests had been there was a dead, hushed silence, broken only by a woman chattering hysterically.

"It's Howard Drake! I saw him! It was Howard Drake! Oh, I saw him!"

Walker suddenly cursed in a frenzy of rage.

"Sending — that — to Alice!" He choked. "By ——! I'll kill the——"

Deering went quietly to a settee and put Alice gently upon it. He came back, his eyes far away. He bent over the box and looked at the thing in it very carefully. When he straightened up his lips were pursed as if he were whistling silently.

Walker's voice seemed to rouse him. Walker was hoarse and trembling with a frantic, terrible rage.

Deering touched his arm.

"Hal, old chap," he said evenly, "you look horribly shaken. There's no need to be quite so excited. This isn't a tragedy, it's an atrocious practical joke. That doesn't happen to be Miss Hill's missing fiancé, murdered and delivered to her door. It's nothing more or less than a rather well-done wax figure, like they used to have in the Eden Musee."

Walker stared wildly, then shuddered.

"It's quite true," insisted Deering quietly. "The hair is crape hair. The flesh is wax." He leaned close to Walker and murmured: "Don't you see, man, that this gives you a reprieve, instead of being the thing you feared? This party will break up now. Go and attend to Miss Hill. She fainted."

And Deering hung casually about until the last of the guests had gone and then joined Walker in a taxicab that chuffed through the streets of the small town. He yawned, as the cab drew away from the Hill residence.

"Quite an evening, Hal," he said sleepily. "You'll get a note from your blackmailer to-morrow or next day."

Walker had deep lines etched about his mouth.

"He—my God! Tom, do you suppose that blackmailer had something to do with this?"

Deering, already making himself comfortable in the jolting vehicle, opened his eyes again.

"My dear chap," he said mildly, "use your head. If you don't see the connection now, you will when the blackmailer person communicates with you next time. Of course, he did it."

"But who is he?" demanded Walker savagely. "Shocking 'Alice like that! Who is he?"

"I shan't tell you," Deering said sleepily. "I hung around him for half an hour, ready to hit him on the jaw every minute. There was no need. You'll hear from him again."

"You know who the man is?" Walker seized Deering by the arm. "How do you know? Who is it?"

"Of course, I know," Deering's voice was drowsy. "It showed plainly. I'm much relieved, because now I can set to work to get something on him and you won't have to shoot him."

"But—"

"Stop asking questions. You wouldn't answer them for me, and I won't answer them for you."

There was silence for a matter of minutes. Then Deering spoke again, without opening his eyes.

"Hal, isn't there some connection between this affair and your blackmailer that you can trace? I'd like to be sure about it."

"I can't see any." Walker's face, haggard and strained, wrinkled as he tried to set his weary brain to work. Then he looked up, his eyes wild. "Yes! I see it! This is the first thing he needs to do! He'd planned this as an earnest of his threat to expose me!"

Deering sighed, his eyes still tightly shut.

"Do you think, my dear chap, that he just planned it within the past few weeks?"

"Of course. I was meeting all his demands—"

Deering looked pityingly at his friend.

"You're handsome, Hal, but you're dumb. There are scratches on the hands of that wax figure, in addition to the bullet hole in its forehead."

"But what—"

"At a guess, my dear fellow, we will find that this Howard Drake was scratched by a cat not longer than two days before his disappearance. That wax figure was very carefully, even artistically made. And it was certainly made not less than two years ago. Otherwise no such minor details would have been remembered, or included. Find out about the cat for me, won't you?"

"I don't need to," said Walker, his voice queerly thin and high. "I remember. You're right. He was scratched by Alice's cat. He killed it."

Deering debated, drowsily.

"Then under the circumstances, old top," he said, yawning, "I'm afraid I'll have to deduce that the blackmailer sent a particularly good bit of wax-work, representing a dead body with a bullet in its forehead, simply to make people talk about the disappearance of the original. And the original, I imagine, was Howard Drake, Miss Hill's missing fiancé. It was an excellent idea to rouse curiosity concerning the disappearance, but that is all it will do. So I suppose that the blackmailer is getting the general public all set to receive information about Drake's disappearance."

Walker clenched his fists.

"It's no use denying it," he said grimly. "I guess that's the idea."

"And, of course, what the blackmailer is threatening to say is that you murdered Drake." Deering yawned

again. "You didn't do it, did you, Hal?"

"God help me!" cried Walker desperately. "I don't know!"

III

ALICE HILL was waiting anxiously when Deering went up the path. She was sitting on the broad, shaded veranda of the house in which the party had been given the night before. She stood up when he approached.

"You pay your party calls promptly, Mr. Deering," she said lightly, "but you're very welcome. Let me show you the garden."

She came down the steps and took his hand.

"My aunt is just inside," she whispered. "Did you get my message?"

"Only that you wanted to see me at once," Deering told her. "I suspect that you had a letter this morning."

"Yes, a letter, from—from—him! He's always telephoned before."

"I jammed your telephone," said Deering, pleased. "He must have tried to telephone, and mailed his note when he failed. We might get some little data from that letter of his."

She led the way to the side of the house, where a fair-sized formal garden had been laid out. Tall hedges and high flowering plants bordered the gravel walks, and there was a little rustic summerhouse in one corner. She turned toward that.

"We'd better look at the flowers on the way," suggested Deering, "if your aunt thinks my call unexpected."

"I told them I was going to ask your advice about tracing the—the thing that came last night." She faltered a little when she mentioned the horrible travesty of a gift she had received.

They went into the small shelter, where vines clambered all about and made for an effort of seclusion. Deering fanned himself with his hat as he sat down opposite her.

"You want to tell me," he suggested, "that the blackmailer person told you he had tried to phone and failed, and warned you that unless you acceded to his demands he would take further measures?"

Her eyes widened.

"How did you know?" she demanded fearfully.

"He would," said Deering. "Of course. They all do. Could you let me see the letter? Hal tells me he isn't sure about whether he killed Drake or not," he added as she hesitated.

She continued to hesitate, and then something close to terror came into her eyes.

"Please. I'd rather not," she said unevenly. "He repeated everything! If any one else had seen the letter—but please don't be angry," she begged. "It isn't fair to you not to let you know everything, but Hal and I are nearly crazy as it is."

Deering nodded.

"I thought Hal was holding something back," he said indifferently. "I'll try not to find out about it."

His eyes dwelt upon her reflectively. She was a very pretty girl. There is a beauty which is only youth, but Alice had more than that. Her eyes were more than merely lustrous brown, shadowed by fear and sadness, and her lips were more than wistful red petals that were made for kisses. There was something almost hauntingly beautiful about her. Deering could understand how Walker cared for her greatly.

"Tell me," he said suddenly, "why don't you marry Hal?"

She started a little.

"Why, there's a will—"

Deering made a gesture.

"I know that. But the fear of losing money doesn't keep a woman from marrying a man, if she loves him enough."

She weighed him for a long minute.

"It's my aunt and uncle," she said at last. Her tone was odd. There was warmth, as of affection, and a coldness, as if she did not wish to explain to a stranger, and a dreary amusement which was very much like despair. "Aunt Lucy and Uncle Bob. Hal wouldn't mind my telling you."

Deering waited.

"They brought me up," she went on evenly. "They were quite well-to-do, and they got settled in a beautiful, comfortable groove that took just exactly their income to live up to, and they lived in that groove for years and years. And then, quite suddenly, they discovered that there wasn't any more income."

"Well?" asked Deering.

She shrugged.

"They were old people by that time, and they simply couldn't change. It would have broken their hearts to lose their home and all they had, and it would have broken their hearts all over again to lose their friends. They simply couldn't adapt themselves. They would have died, quite literally, before they could have adapted themselves to something new. And I was fond of them."

Deering took out his pipe meditatively.

"So, when that horrible will was read I accepted the terms. Without it they would have broken their poor old hearts. I took the income that was to be given me until I married Howard. It is my money that keeps up the house. They know it, but they pretend

even to themselves that they don't. It's rather pathetic—and quite amusing."

"I see," said Deering unemotionally.

"If I marry Hal," she said somberly, "I put them out into the street. My income stops if I marry any one but Howard during his lifetime. And to leave them penniless will be the same as killing them outright. What can I do?"

Deering asked permission to smoke. He began to mull over the information he had, which was not much. Presently he asked:

"Would you have married him for their sakes?"

"We were going to be married," she said tonelessly, "and he disappeared the day before the ceremony."

"You knew Hal then?"

"I—I had known him about six weeks," she said uneasily.

She watched him in sudden fear as he relapsed into abstraction again. He puffed away upon his highly disreputable pipe, his eyes fixed up a post of the little summerhouse. He seemed to have forgotten her presence.

"Howard knew that I—liked Hal," she said uncertainly. "He didn't mind. It rather amused him to know that I cared for Hal and was marrying him."

Deering nodded.

"With a real corpse," he commented, "instead of a wax figure, almost any good prosecuting attorney could hang Hal. He'd have everything but eyewitnesses. Motive, necessity for immediate action, and all the rest."

She went pale.

"But—you don't believe—"

"That Hal killed him? How do I know? Hal hasn't even told me what he remembers of the affair."

"They had a—fight, and Hal went back some time later and found Howard unconscious. For—a reason

he had, he took Howard up to a little shack he owned in the woods. It's a summer camp. He went out to buy bandages and such things." She shut her eyes, shuddering. "When he got back the house was in ruins from fire."

"And maybe Drake was in it, and maybe he wasn't. I leave out the question of why Hal didn't simply call a doctor, or why they fought, or any of a number of other questions. But, did he know whether Drake was dead or not when he left the cabin?"

"He—he wasn't dead then. He was breathing. Hal thought he had a fractured skull."

"What did Hal hit him with?"

"His fist." Alice had grown very pale as the inquisition continued. Now Deering seemed to realize it. He asked one more question:

"Did Hal look for—traces, in the ruins?"

"Y-yes, and he found nothing. He thinks maybe he set the fire by accident."

Deering knocked out his pipe.

"Doesn't it occur to you as odd that so lifelike a figure could be made without a model?"

Alice sat up suddenly. Her face flamed with hope.

"You mean that Howard must have posed for it?"

"Living or dead, he must have," agreed Deering. "But, if living, with what motive? Or, if dead why the bullet hole? If Hal is telling the truth, any one who saw the crime or stole the body would not have put in such an inaccurate detail. He certainly had an eye for detail. Witness the cat scratches on the hands. Certainly Drake must have posed."

An expression of haunting doubt swept over Alice's features.

"You say if Hal is telling the truth. You don't mean—"

"I'm looking at all sides of it," said Deering vexedly. "And then, too, it is hard to believe that Hal could fracture a man's skull with a blow of his fist. That would take a devilish strong man."

"Hal was—very angry—"

Deering looked up sharply.

"If I were any one else," he said gently, "I would deduce that you saw the blow struck. Miss Hill, I wouldn't get off my guard like that. It doesn't matter with me, but it might with some one else."

She was staring at Deering now, deathly pale.

"You seem to think that Hal isn't telling the truth?"

"No one," said Deering, "is ever able to tell the truth, if by the truth you mean exactly and actually what happened." He puffed angrily at his pipe. "I don't believe that Hal fractured Drake's skull with a blow of his fist. I don't believe Drake was in the house when it was burned. I believe that if we ever find that Drake is dead, we will find a bullet hole in his head, just as in the head of that wax figure that was sent here."

"But Hal says he didn't use a revolver—"

Deering made an impatient gesture.

"Miss Hill," he said sharply, "Hal is saying things that are absolutely impossible. On the other hand, I believe absolutely in Hal's innocence. Certainly I don't believe in encouraging blackmail. So I am going to sift this infernal mystery to the bottom. There are two very simple ways of finding out the answer. One is by tracing the wax figure back to the maker—"

The roaring of an automobile engine drowned out the rest. He looked

up, frowning. A car had stopped before the door and Dr. Hollenden had stepped out, and another man was following him.

"The sheriff," said Deering annoyedly. "He is a very energetic person. Your uncle took me to see him this morning. I suppose we had better go. And that is the doctor. I met him last night."

The doctor waved boisterously when he saw them emerge from the summer-house.

"How are you, Alice?" he called cheerfully. "I saw the sheriff coming this way, so I had him bring me. I wanted to look you over this morning anyhow. Do you feel all right?"

"Quite recovered, thanks," said Alice. "It was silly of me to faint, perhaps."

"Best thing in the world," the doctor told her. "The longer you looked at the thing, the more shocking it was. I'm glad you did faint."

The sheriff had approached Deering confidentially.

"That was a good tip you gave me," he said softly. "I've wired to all the cold storage warehouses. I ought to have an answer this afternoon."

"I hope you find out something," Deering told him smiling. "I've wired my office to make a few inquiries likewise."

"What's this? What's this?" The doctor beamed at the pair. "Are you tracing down the miscreant?"

"We've decided," said Deering gently, "that the figure was made not less than two years ago. And, being wax, of course it wouldn't keep so long without being retouched from time to time. A really warm summer day would ruin it. The sheriff has made inquiries of all the cold storage warehouses within striking distance to find

out if they had a package of such-and-such size in storage from about the time of Drake's disappearance to the present day. In cold storage the wax figure would keep perfectly for an indefinite time."

"By James! That's clever!" said the doctor enthusiastically. "Let me know what you find! It's fascinating to be on the inside of a case like this. Fascinating!"

"I want now," said the sheriff, with modest pride, "to look at the figure again. It's down in the cellar, where it is moderately cool."

"You—you won't need me, then," said Alice faintly. "I couldn't bear—"

She fled suddenly. The doctor looked after her.

"Poor girl!" he said sympathetically. "She has a great deal to stand up under. And I suspect that young Walker is beginning to make her care for him. It's a pity."

"Why?" asked Deering.

"Why—er—" The doctor hesitated, then chuckled. "You forget, my dear sir, we doctors are privileged not to express anything but opinions. We don't have to justify them. It's lucky, eh? When it comes to a reason for diagnosis, in particular."

IV

DEERING went with the others as they were led down to the cool, murky basement, dark, and with the damp and musty smell of cellars since the beginning of time. The servant exposed the box they had come to see and retired, somewhat precipitately.

"I am going," said the sheriff confidentially, "to look for finger-prints on the wax. It is certain that no one could model this without leaving his prints somewhere on the surface. And

once we have the prints of the modeler we will have the prints of the man who is responsible for the affair."

"You mean the murderer?" asked the doctor interestedly. "By James! This is exciting! Perhaps we're actually hanging a man, right now, eh?"

"Hardly," said Deering mildly. "If there's a murder involved, the murderer did not make this wax figure."

He switched on a light just above the gruesome image. The sheriff bent over and looked up suddenly.

"Why do you think the murderer didn't model it?" he demanded.

"Look at the features," said Deering. The wax features stared up at them, uncannily lifelike—or, rather, deathlike. Only the knowledge that the face was made of wax kept the scene in the dark and gloomy cellar from being unbearably depressing. A single light, glowing down in blackness. A long box, from which the face, with its bluish blur in the center of its forehead, peered up.

"Like the chamber of horrors in the old Eden Musee, eh?" asked the doctor. He looked up at Deering. "I say, why didn't the murderer model it?"

"It's rather good," said Deering mildly. "If you find finger-prints on it anywhere—and you ought to—they will be the finger-prints of a very worthy artisan. He made a labor of love out of this piece. Look at the features again."

"What about them?"

"They're well done," said Deering. "Excellently done. The artist even caught that expression of serenity one sometimes sees on the faces of the dead. Drake may or may not be dead, but no murderer would ever be able to conceive of his victim as at peace."

The sheriff grunted, and went on with his work. Shortly the cellar was smoky with flash light vapor. After a long time the sheriff folded up his camera and put the cloth back upon the box.

"I'm going to have this taken to the jail," he commented, "and put in the cellar there. There's something in what you say, Mr. Deering. I'm inclined to think this isn't all a very poor practical joke."

"It might be, at that," said the doctor. "Some people have such atrocious ideas of humor."

"No," insisted the sheriff. "I think there's more to it than that. Mr. Deering and I agree."

"What is your real opinion, Deering?" demanded the doctor.

"If a doctor need only state an opinion, without explaining the cause," Deering smiled, "a detective can surely look mysterious and say, 'I have a clew, and an arrest of a suspect may be expected within seventy-two hours.'"

"But have you, seriously?"

"Oh, several," said Deering carelessly. "For one thing, we have yet to be sure whether Howard Drake is living or dead. A good deal hangs on that. I understand he was a person of rather curious mentality."

"He was a beast!" rumbled the doctor savagely. "A beast! Alice was lucky to escape marriage with him."

"I have a clew," said Deering smiling, "that indicates that he may be alive. A trick like this would be like him, from what I hear."

"Then I'll show you something," said the doctor shortly, "to prove that this was modeled from a dead body. Look at the eyes."

He snatched the cover off the figure again.

"I'm looking," said Deering.

"The eyes," said the doctor. "The lids are perfectly rounded. That means the man was either asleep or dead when posing for this. The eyelids of a living, wakeful man are asymmetrical. The eyeball is not round. The lens is a protuberance. It is a little thing, but if the workman who modeled this was genuinely good, as you say, he would have noticed that detail."

"Interesting, but hardly convincing," said Deering lightly. "My dear doctor, almost you convince me that you had something to do with the affair."

"I'm safe enough from that!" The doctor laughed. "I first came to the town a good six months after Drake disappeared. But Alice has told me something about him."

"It's a murder," interjected the sheriff determinedly. "Nobody'd go to all the trouble of having this thing fixed up if it weren't a murder. We've got to trace the wax figure. Mr. Deering, if you like, we'll work on that end."

"I'd rather not tread on your toes, sheriff," said Deering good-naturedly. "You follow that out. I'll trace another thread I have. But I'll give you one tip I have—"

"Oh, fiddlesticks," scoffed the doctor. "You two with your professional courtesies! I'm going upstairs and see that Alice is all right and get you to drive me back, sheriff."

"I'll go with you, if I may," said Deering.

"Come along with me, and I'll give you a prescription," said the doctor jovially from the stairs. "I'll be out at the car in a moment."

He was gone. The sheriff picked up his impedimenta.

"Sheriff," said Deering meditative-

ly, "I said I'd give you a tip. Under your hat until something breaks?"

"Right," said the sheriff. Deering rather approved of the man. He was a small town officer, but he was nobody's fool. "What is it?"

"You wired the cold storage plants. But there are laws forbidding cold storage plants to keep things in storage longer than so many months. It's to protect the public from ancient food, but it would operate against wax figures just as well."

The sheriff snapped his fingers vexedly.

"That's right," he said vexed. "I didn't think of that."

"But furriers also have cold storage plants," said Deering mildly. "They keep furs in cold storage where the air is perfectly dry. You notice that there is no trace of mildew on these clothes. I had my men inquire at a number of furriers. They found that a package was in Bernstein's, in Wilmington, for precisely the time this figure should have been in storage."

The sheriff looked up alertly.

"Thanks!" he said warmly. "I like to work with you, Mr. Deering. We don't have much of this sort of thing around here, and I'm a little handicapped. Did you find out who got it?"

"It was a fake name, of course," Deering explained. "But my men are tracing it. At last reports it seemed to indicate—well—" He hesitated. "It's a silly precaution, but I'm going to whisper."

He did. The sheriff jumped.

"I needn't suggest that you keep that secret," said Deering dryly.

The sheriff's face was stupefaction itself.

"But—but he—"

"Precisely," said Deering. "I'm

going to look at one more thing about this box. I'll join you in a moment."

The sheriff ascended the stairs heavily, pondering bewilderedly what Deering had told him. Deering waited until he had disappeared, then said quietly:

"Miss Hill"—he paused. "Miss Hill, please come out."

There was a stirring, and her face appeared from behind a pillar, deathly pale.

"I believe," she whispered, "that you think Hal killed him. You think Hal lied to me! You think Hal has been blackmailing us both, and now—"

"You mean," said Deering softly, "that *you* begin to be afraid of that. But I've known Hal for years, and, on my honor, Miss Hill, he wouldn't. I wanted to say to you that it was very unwise for you to come down here while we were here. You might have heard something very shocking. I want you to promise not to do anything of the sort again."

"But the doctor, talking about Hal. I heard him say he was afraid Hal would make me care for him. Why shouldn't I?"

"There's no reason in the world that I know of," Deering told her. "Please go up, now, by the way you came. You might pretend that the tears I see in your eyes are caused by the necessity of thinking again about the rather horrible effigy in the box yonder."

Uncertainly, she went. And Deering made a minute and private examination of the thing in the packing case. After perhaps five minutes he went up.

The doctor and the sheriff were waiting for him beside the car.

"Found another of your clues?" asked the doctor, beaming.

"Oh, yes," said Deering. "Sheriff, will it be out of your way to drop me

off at Hal Walker's place? I'm staying there, and I want to smoke a pipe and think over things."

"All right," said the sheriff uneasily. He was still perturbed by the name Deering had whispered to him.

They drove down the tree-shaded avenues in silence. The sheriff was morose and uncertain. The doctor gazed from one to the other, in silence. Deering was frowning. The car stopped.

"I'm going to drop in on you tomorrow or next day, doctor," said Deering. "I think you might be able to help me with my end of the affair."

"Come in, do," the doctor told him heartily. "We will discuss the matter with Charley. He is my friend and confidant." He chuckled as if at some secret jest. "Charley may be able to help us out."

The sheriff turned his head.

"He's talking about a blamed skeleton he keeps in his study," he explained. "It's a horrible-looking thing."

"A souvenir of my student days," said the doctor complacently. "He never repeats anything he hears. Come in, Deering. I'll be glad to see you."

Deering went into the house and up to the second floor where Walker had a bachelor apartment. He opened the front door, sniffed suddenly, then plunged forward. A moment later he was trying a door and finding it locked. He drew back and crashed against the panel, then again. The wood gave way and he thrust in his hand, then lunged into the room, across to a window and battered out the panes with his bare fists.

Only then did he turn to Walker's still figure, sprawled out in a chair. A breeze was blowing in the window, but the fumes of gas were overpoweringly strong. Deering seized his friend in

his arms and lugged him into another room. Walker was quite unconscious, but his heart was still beating. Deering listened at his breast and began to be very busy.

With artificial respiration and chafing and the powerful smell of ammonia from the bathroom medicine chest, he saw Walker's eyes flutter open and close again after twenty minutes of uninterrupted work. Deering kept at it for ten minutes longer, when Walker gazed vaguely up at him. For a time his eyes were dreamy and dull. Then they brightened suddenly—resentfully.

"Damn you, Tom," said Walker weakly. "Why did you bring me back? This was the best thing to do."

"You confounded idiot!" snapped Deering. "Haven't you any more nerve than to go around suiciding? As soon as you can stand on your feet, I'm going to knock your head off!" He gasped suddenly, and turned away his head. "You blamed fool!" he cried uncertainly. "I've got a good mind to shoot you!"

Walker struggled weakly to put out his hand.

"You're a good scout, Tom. I'm hanged if you aren't crying! But if you'll go in the other room you'll find out I've written a confession of killing Drake. You won't feel so sorry for me then."

"Crying!" raged Deering. "That infernal ammonia made my eyes water. That's all! And you can confess until you're black in the face! I wouldn't believe you under oath!"

Walker tried to sit up, and failed.

"But I tell you," he cried desperately from the couch, "I murdered Drake. Alice doesn't know it. I couldn't bear to tell her. I killed him and burned up all the incriminating evidence in the shack! I wanted you to find out who

was blackmailing me without finding out what he threatened to expose. I'd have killed him, too, and ended the matter. But you can't find him! Let me go ahead and kill myself, Tom. That's the best way out for Alice. The blackmailer would have no hold on her then."

"You say you killed Drake, eh?" asked Deering ominously.

"Yes, I did."

"And I suppose you made the shack a funeral pyre for him, too?"

"Yes! I only ask you, as my friend, to let me kill myself rather than let the law do it."

"Hal," said Deering deliberately, "you're a confounded, triple-plated liar! If you killed Drake and burned his body, how is it that the clothes he wore and you say you burned with him, *how is it that they're on the wax figure in Judge Hill's cellar?* Come clean! What's back of all this?"

V

"I'VE told you all I can now, Tom," said Walker wearily.

"Nothing of the sort," said Deering calmly. "You've told me all you intend to tell me—a very different thing. I shall have to deduce the rest, and it is much more important than what you've said."

Walker, still somewhat weak and shaken from his attempt at suicide of the day before, lay upon a couch in the smoking room of his bachelor quarters. Deering was sprawled out in a morris chair, scowling at the fireplace.

"Very few blacks are really black, anyway," he said gloomily. "Most of them are purples. There aren't any perfect whites. There is no such thing as a straight line or an accurate circle, except in the imagination, and Einstein questions the possibility of even that.

Truth in any form is unattainable. Especially in my line it's nonexistent. No accomplice ever understands all of the tricks he helps to pull. No thief ever appreciates the value of the thing he steals.

"Not even a murderer can recall accurately just what he has done. No one in all the world can tell the truth about a crime, because it's a mental impossibility; but, dammit, it doesn't seem fair for you not to tell me as near the truth as you can."

"I've told you all I can tell you, Tom."

"You make me excessively fatigued," said Deering angrily. "You've told me little enough! You had a quarrel with Drake. What for? I don't know! But you hit him. Then you left him lying on the ground."

"It was because I hated the man so intensely I was literally afraid to stay near him," said Walker grimly. "I was fighting with myself to keep from beating out his brains with a club. I was quite capable of killing him then. I had to go away, or do it."

"You did not go away to avoid murdering him," corrected Deering urgently, staring pessimistically at the fireplace. "You went away to escort Miss Hill to her home."

Walker half rose, then lay back again.

"Where did you get that idea?" he demanded fiercely.

"She said that you were very angry, in a tone that told me she was present." Deering knocked out his pipe and refilled it without a pause. He lighted it once more. "You also tell me that you returned, and found him lying still where you had left him. He was breathing heavily. Instead of calling a doctor for him, you got a motor car and took him twenty miles to your

camp in the woods. You have not told me why you did that."

"I'm not going to," Walker told him grimly.

"And then, with a man you believed to be severely injured, you still did not go for a doctor. You went for bandages and such truck—evidently intending to bandage him up yourself, which was at least inconsiderate."

"I told you just now that I killed him," said Walker, wearily. "Why not let it go at that?"

"And then, it seems, on your return you found the cottage or the camp in ruins from fire. You found no trace of the man you had left unconscious, in the wreckage."

"He was unconscious," said Walker. "He couldn't have moved. And I had heated water to wash out a cut on his head, where he had struck a small rock in falling. I used an oil stove. I suppose the lamp exploded while I was away and set fire to the place."

"Very well," agreed Deering morosely. "All this stuff would look devilish bad for you if it came out in court. I've got to keep it out of court. We'll say that Drake disappeared from the cabin. Giving you the benefit of every doubt, we say that he disappeared into thin air, with a fractured skull, which," he added sardonically, "he got from a blow of your fist."

"I did not hit him with anything else."

"And short of a heavyweight prize fighter who would know just how to put his whole weight into such a wallop, there'd not be one chance in a million of the thing happening from a fist blow. Where did you land on him?"

"On the point of the jaw."

"Which would break a great deal easier than his skull. Did you hurt your fist?"

"I skinned it," said Walker wearily. "I remember that."

Deering grunted.

"You'd smash your hand before his skull. How long was he unconscious?"

"I left him a good two hours after I'd hit him."

"And you expected a man to stay out for two hours after a wallop on the jaw! Great guns! There's no jury on earth would believe it."

"I'm not asking you to believe it," Walker told him, dully. "I simply tell you the thing as it happened. It isn't credible."

"But if you were lying, you'd have tried, at least, to concoct something plausible," snapped Deering. "Dammit, I believe it happened, but I know it's impossible!"

Walker stirred uneasily, and was still.

"Six months later, you began to be approached for blackmail. You paid it. You continued to pay it." Deering waved his pipe irritably. "Three days ago you decided to call on me for help. You wired me, and after you had done so the blackmailer issued an ultimatum, threatening to expose you at Miss Hill's party. I did not get here in time to do more than attend the party, but was there when a perfect wax model of the missing man—you'll notice I say missing, Hal—was sent in to Miss Hill, presumably with the blackmailer's compliments."

"Quite right," said Walker, from the couch.

"We agree that the model was sent so dramatically to call attention again to Drake's disappearance, which had slipped from most people's minds. We also agree that it would be a good idea to trace the model. If we found the person who sent it, we might learn how Drake was removed from the cabin.

Removed, he must have been, because his clothes were not burned up. The truckman can't tell us where the package he delivered came from. It was left on the station platform and a telephone message instructed him to deliver it during the party."

"Right," said Walker again wearily.

"Confound! My men, out of town, find that the package was kept in a furrier's cold storage vaults for two years. They have a lead, but no definite information as to who paid for the storage, or who took it away. I have a hunch, but no evidence to back it up. I run against a blank wall all around. You tell me a totally unconvincing yarn I can't help believing, and hold back the most important information of all. For the rest, I haven't heard a single person speak a decent word of Drake, and I could probably concoct a first-class murder charge against half the people in town. Offhand, I can think of half a dozen who'd have to do some tall explaining."

"And I'd have to do most of all," Walker commented grimly.

"Judge Hill would have to do more," said Deering cryptically. "But this is a case of first accused, first discredited. Do you realize that in the facts I've just listed there's very little that's of any value whatever?"

"I can't help it."

"The devil you can't" said Deering irritably. "Why, for instance, did you try a silly stunt like suicide?"

"The man, whoever he is, can prove me guilty of murder," Walker told him helplessly. "He can have me hung. By threatening to do that, he has a hold over Alice, because she cares somewhat for me. In time he'll expose me anyway. It is much better to beat him to it. It will spare Alice."

"He can do nothing whatever with-

out producing something better than a wax figure." Deering got up and began to pace the floor. "You can't be jailed, even, on a murder charge with the body missing. *Corpus delicti*, you know. In any event, the infernal black-mailer has produced the missing man's pants! Does it occur to you that you're by no means sure that Drake is dead?"

"He's dead, all right," said Walker.

"I know he's dead, but there's no proof of it!" Deering waved his hand angrily. "But this is making me peevish. You won't help me. You're not worried about a murder charge anyway. I said just now that few criminals knew exactly what they were doing. You're not nearly as much afraid of being charged with murder as you are of something else."

Walker started up.

"What else?" he demanded.

"I don't know! And it annoys me! I don't believe even this blackmailer knows exactly what he's threatening you with. You'd stand a fighting chance, at least, of being acquitted on a murder charge even if they produced an authentic corpse, but you just showed you'd rather commit suicide than even be suspected of it while you remained alive, while you'd cheerfully confess to it after you'd suicided, even though you're by no means sure you're guilty!"

Walker gazed at him steadily.

"All right," he said evenly. "Suppose that's so? What are you going to do about it?"

Deering went out into the hall. He reappeared with his hat.

"I'm going down to talk to the sheriff," said Deering irritably. "And after that I'm going in to see Dr. Hollenden. He has a skeleton in his study he's going to introduce me to. There are no brains left in that skeleton's

head, but maybe he will be more intelligent company than you have been, at that!"

The door slammed behind him.

Deering seemed to calm down somewhat as he walked through the tree-shaded streets of the little town. It was a comfortable place to live, this Keensburg. A small place, not highly organized enough to make people rush about madly from one part to another, it had an atmosphere of leisure and comfort that insensibly soothed Deering's irritation. He found himself slackening his pace.

Judge Hill, strolling sedately along the principal street, greeted him with a cordiality that, as always, seemed to be rather a breaking down of an almost impassable barrier than a natural expression of temperament.

"I hope you are enjoying your visit here, Mr. Deering," he said.

"I am," Deering confessed ruefully. "I have been madder since I've been here than for years. And I enjoy getting really angry."

The judge considered the statement blankly, and dismissed it as incomprehensible.

"Have you—er—made any progress in tracing that ghastly practical joke that was played upon my niece?" he inquired. "I am indignant about that, sir, and I have no hesitation in declaring that I shall prosecute the perpetrator to the full extent of the law!"

"He deserves all you can give him," agreed Deering. "The sheriff has made some progress. We are inclined to think, though, that there is more to the affair than a mere practical joke."

The judge debated, solemnly.

"You mean, perhaps, that the wax figure may be designed to make us think that Howard Drake is actually dead?"

"I wouldn't be surprised." Deering hesitated, and smiled diffidently. "After all, it's a rather elaborate affair for nothing more than a joke."

The judge considered this with his same portentous air.

"I will confess to you, sir," he said at last, clearing his throat, "that I would be relieved to learn of Howard's death. You may know that my niece is under powerful obligations to marry him should he reappear. In his absence—well, sir, I have come to the conclusion that she would possibly be much happier should she be made free to bestow her hand elsewhere. She is a dutiful girl, and she would not think of such a thing, but if he were to be proved dead, why, after the shock had been lessened by time—"

"Again I agree with you," Deering told him. "From all I hear, Drake was a pretty unpleasant specimen."

"Doctor Hollenden seems to think we shall have disclosures of his death, eventually," said the judge, almost hopefully.

"Just how does the doctor come in?" asked Deering suddenly.

"He is the local coroner," explained the judge solemnly. "Also he is a friend of my wife, my niece, and myself. We have repeatedly asked him for advice. It has always been invaluable."

"I think I'll drop in to see him," said Deering meditatively. "It's always a good idea to get a fresh viewpoint. I'll run around to his house."

"Remind him," the judge said importantly, "that we are always honored by his presence in our home. I would add the same of you, sir."

With a grand wave of his hand, the judge resumed his stroll.

"And that is the man," Deering reflected, "who is living on his niece's

money! Ho, hum! This is a mixed-up world."

He resumed his walk, making the doctor's home his first objective instead of the sheriff's office. He found the place without difficulty, and turned in the neat concrete walk just as the doctor appeared in the doorway, with his hat on his head and a cane in his hand. He waved cordially.

"Come in, Deering! I was thinking of you just now!"

"If I'm interrupting—"

"Not at all. Come in. Let me show you my sanctum sanctorum. And you will want to meet Charley, of course."

The doctor's hat went on a table. He seemed genuinely delighted to see Deering, and led the way with an air of pride to a room on the second floor. It was unmistakably a man's room, and as unmistakably the study of a medical man. Books littered the place. A skeleton grinned sardonically from one corner. A mass of surgical periodicals and pamphlets littered a table, on which an ash-tray rested precariously, filled to overflowing with cigar-butts and burned matches.

"I never let my housekeeper enter this place," the doctor explained with a twinkle in his eyes. "She would faint from holy horror if she got a single glimpse of it. And I keep it highly untidy, which to me means wholly comfortable. You can spill ashes on the floor without fear, and there is no chair on which you cannot put your feet."

"I envy you," admitted Deering, with a smile. "I've just one thing I want to ask you, because you're accustomed to keep secrets. Then I'll be running along."

The doctor beamed at him.

"If it's a secret, you must remember that a doctor can claim privilege even

on the witness stand. I hope something interesting has turned up." He turned away. "But in the meantime I'll get you a drink. That's Charley, by the way. He is a patient audience for all my idle speculations and never gives me away. In addition he is a wholesome influence. He greets me with his *memento mori* when I grow unduly cheerful. Make his acquaintance while I'm gone."

He was gone, exuding an atmosphere of good humor. Deering smiled slowly at his back, and strolled over to make the acquaintance of the skeleton.

The bones had been articulated with wire, after the fashion of medical specimens, and it was rather horrible to look at, of course, but Deering glanced it over without emotion.

VI

WHEN the doctor came back he was fingering the pamphlets on the table.

"The *Journal of Endocrinology*," he commented, "and Hutchinson on acromegaly and gigantism. Why, most of this is internal-gland stuff, doctor."

"My hobby," admitted the doctor, complacently. "Some day we doctors will put you detectives out of business. In the meantime, let us help the undertakers. This is bootleg liquor. Here's to crime."

He lifted his glass and downed the contents with a click of his tongue. Deering smiled, then frowned.

"I'm puzzled," he said vexedly. "You're the only man I want to ask this question just now, because the sheriff might get excited."

"Charley will keep me calm," said the doctor, nodding toward the gruesomely grinning object in the corner. "What is it?"

"Who," asked Deering, "has the initials 'E. H.'?"

The doctor set his glass down suddenly.

"Why do you ask?"

Deering fumbled in his pocket, seeming to feel an object there.

"Every man who undertakes a crime," he said abruptly, "makes some sort of slip. The man who sent that wax figure had kept out the contents of Drake's pockets while the figure was in storage. He reinserted the various articles before sending it to Miss Hill. He made one mistake."

The doctor's color changed.

"What is it?"

"He included an article from his own pockets," said Deering quietly. "And it is not initialed 'H. D.' as Howard Drake's possessions should have been initialed, but 'E. H.' Whose initials are they?"

The doctor stared at him, very pale. He tried to speak, and failed, and finally stammered:

"My God, man! They're Judge Hill's initials! Alice's uncle!"

There was a moment's pause.

"Judge Hill, you say?" repeated Deering. "But why should he send that figure to Miss Hill?"

The doctor was still pale, and very much upset.

"He—he would have a motive for killing Drake," he said uneasily, "but the whole thing is preposterous. Preposterous!"

"He just admitted that he would be relieved if Drake were proved dead," said Deering dryly. "I was talking to him ten minutes ago."

The doctor paced across the room and back.

"Drake was a beast," he said at last, reluctantly, "and Judge Hill is a highly honorable man. She—well,

she felt it her duty to marry Drake. It might be that the judge felt it his duty to save her from such a marriage at any cost. In other words, he committed a crime to save her from marriage to a beast, and now is preparing to reveal that crime to give her a chance for happiness, to allow her to inherit the fortune she will receive either upon proof of Drake's death or upon her marriage to him."

"It is only necessary to assume a point of view on the judge's part that would make him think such an inheritance would constitute happiness for her." Deering shrugged. "Oh, well! We needn't bother about the psychology of the matter. The thing to do is to try to prove the hypothesis."

"As to that," said the doctor slowly, "I doubt if you will find anything at all. The judge is a very clever man. If your theory is correct, you will never have any evidence to justify even an arrest."

"I haven't enough now," admitted Deering frankly. "But the sheriff is tracing back the figure. He may connect the judge with it quite unmistakably."

The doctor stood up.

"I was on my way to the sheriff's office when you stopped by. He telephoned a message for me to come as soon as I could spare the time. This thing has upset me a great deal. Suppose we go down there together?—And—well, I am very fond of Judge Hill. I wish you wouldn't mention this to the sheriff unless you have to."

"Never fear," Deering said meditatively. "I won't."

He joined the other man as he moved toward the door. In silence, the doctor still greatly disturbed by the talk, they went out and into the street again.

Through the shaded streets again, and to the small business section of the town. Past the jail, and the courthouse green.

"There's the sheriff's car," said the doctor.

The sheriff was in it, and waved impatiently for them to come. He had apparently seen them some distance off. Another car was being filled with shovels and picks, a short distance away.

"I was just coming for you, doctor," said the sheriff, when they were in earshot. "Something important has turned up, that needs you as coroner."

The doctor made a wry face.

"If you'd care to come, Deering—"

"There's room. I've news for you, too," said the sheriff, waving his hand urgently. "You were quite right about that wax figure."

"You traced the Eden Musee wax-modelers?" Deering stepped into the car and the sheriff let in the clutch before he had completely seated himself. "I wired my office to turn over anything they got directly to you."

The sheriff was silent for a moment, in a temporary traffic jam—rare in that small town. When the car was clear again he looked behind to make sure the flivver was following.

"Yes," he said at last. "They located one of them only fifty miles away, just across the State line. I went down to see him yesterday. He made the model."

"He's a very good workman," commented Deering calmly. "How about finger-prints?"

"In another state, I could only ask him," the sheriff told him. "But he was quite willing to let me have his prints. They compared perfectly with those on the wax figure. So far, Mr. Deering, you have been right on every count."

"I wonder how long I'll keep up?"

Deering smiled as the car jolted over a rough road. "But—"

"He was told," said the sheriff grimly, "that the authorities wanted the model as an exhibit in a trial which would have to be postponed too long to allow the body itself to be used. He was warned to keep the matter secret, pending an arrest."

"Description?" asked Deering.

"None!" the sheriff said vexedly.

"He tells me he gets many commissions. Some of them, confound him, are for fakes for dime museums, and the like. He doesn't remember what the man looked like who ordered this one. He was not much interested. Instead, he told me proudly that he was sure it was a good likeness."

"And you couldn't jog his memory?"

"At one time," said the sheriff disgustedly, "he was almost certain it was a young, smooth-shaved man, and at another he was certain it was an old man with a white beard."

The doctor cast a startled glance at Deering. That latter description fitted Judge Hill perfectly. But Deering's face did not change its expression.

"But he is quite certain that he modeled the figure from a dead body?" he asked.

"Absolutely."

"Then Drake's dead," commented Deering.

He fell silent. For ten minutes or more they drove without a word. Then the doctor said suddenly:

"What's this errand, sheriff? A suicide or a killing?"

"A killing, I guess," said the sheriff grimly. "I left word at your house. Didn't you get it? I thought that was why both of you came."

The doctor leaned forward.

"Not—"

"Drake's body yes." The sheriff clipped his words crisply. "An anonymous letter arrived this morning telling us where to dig."

Deering pulled out his pipe.

"At a guess," he suggested, "it's on Hal Walker's place. Isn't it?"

"It is."

The doctor mopped his forehead. Deering filled his pipe without appreciable excitement. The doctor touched his knee.

"But—what about this?" he asked in a low tone. "How does this fit in with Judge Hill?"

"It doesn't," said Deering naturally.

"But do you think Walker—"

"I don't know. He asked me to help Judge Hill find the man who had sent the wax figure to his niece, while I was down here. The murder doesn't concern me particularly. Offhand, I wouldn't imagine Hal did it. I've known him quite a long time."

The doctor subsided. The car turned off the main road and threaded a dirt track for a matter of miles. Then it began to buck a hill, and finally came to rest in a little thicket of pines, where a clearing showed a well, some traces of attempts at landscaping, a terrace or so, and a blackened chimney surrounded by sodden, rain-subdued ashes.

"Here we are," said the sheriff. "Now we'll see what we will see."

Deering sat on the running-board and smoked his pipe thoughtfully while the sheriff paced off this way and that, and finally indicated a spot at which his deputies were to dig. The doctor seemed to be fascinated by the process and lingered near the place, but Deering had apparently no interest whatever.

It was a long time later that the sheriff came over to the car.

"My camera," he said grimly. "We found it."

Deering followed as he went back. He waited until the pictures had been taken, then climbed down into the hole.

"A bullet through the skull," he commented. "No other injuries. The clothes weren't buried with the body."

One of the deputies went to one side, his face wrenched as if he were sick.

"At that," said the doctor composedly, "it wasn't as bad as it might have been. It was a clean skeleton."

The sheriff, his face very grave, was consulting a paper in his hand, evidently the anonymous letter.

"We'll find the gun in there, too," he said curtly, nodding at the blackened heap of ashes and partly-burned beams.

"Just a moment, sheriff," said Deering quietly. "Where will the gun be found?"

"In the debris where the bedroom was."

"The writer of that letter must have been in the house before it was burned. The bedroom was at this end of the house, wasn't it?"

The sheriff consulted the letter again.

"Yes."

"Good! Let's take a picture or so of the ashes before we disturb them. That always goes well with juries."

The sheriff handed over the camera.

"You've been right so far, Mr. Deering. Go ahead."

Deering snapped three or four pictures, focusing them very carefully, and taking a great deal of time. He handed the instrument back with a smile.

"I left you a couple of plates to photograph the weapon *in situ*, sheriff—as you uncover it."

The sheriff himself attacked the

beams, moving them to one side. Deering helped, busily. An exclamation from the sheriff stopped him.

"Here it is!"

A revolver lay nestled among the charred remains, the tip of its barrel alone remaining exposed to the elements. The sheriff reached back for the camera and proceeded carefully.

On the way back in the sheriff's car, Deering got out his notebook.

"That was a Hess-Western revolver, wasn't it, sheriff?"

"Yes," said the sheriff laconically. "Empty. The bullets were exploded by the fire, but six empty shells were in the cylinder. I'll look up the number. We registered revolvers here, you know."

"Thanks." Deering scribbled busily for a moment and tore out the sheet. "I'll get you to drop me off at the telegraph office, if you will, on our way in."

There was silence almost until they had reached Keensburg. Then the sheriff commented.

"Considering everything, Mr. Deering, the location of the body, the finding of the weapon, and so on, what would you do?"

"I'd find the owner of the revolver first," said Deering.

"And if it's Mr. Walker? You will remember that he has been attentive to Miss Hill since Mr. Drake's disappearance, and that Mr. Drake disappeared the day before he and Miss Hill were to have been married. There is a motive that might be made out there."

Deering debated for an instant.

"If I were in your place," he said thoughtfully, "I think I'd arrest Hal. There's no reasonable doubt but that the gun is his. I am quite sure I would arrest him. You have still to clear up the matter of the man who had the wax

figure made, and it would have been suicidal folly for Hal to have done so, and the guilty knowledge of whoever wrote that anonymous letter. They are probably one and the same person. You can probably get him as an accessory after the crime. But certainly, positively, absolutely, I advise you to arrest Hal."

"And that's just what I'm going to do," said the sheriff grimly.

VII

DEERING felt a pang at his heart when he saw Alice's face. It was drawn, and white, and unspeakably pitiful. She simply stared at him when he came into the room, as if some horror beyond belief had numbed her, and as if she hardly knew that she was not alone.

"Miss Hill," said Deering patiently. "I hate to trouble—"

"T-tell me," she said uncertainly, her breath coming in little gasps. "Have—have they arrested Hal yet?"

Deering jumped.

"They arrested him ten minutes ago. How did you know!"

She touched the breast of her gown. Something crinkled inside.

"A letter," she told him uncertainly. "From—from the blackmailer. He said Hal would be—arrested to-day. I've been trying to—get in touch with him. The—telephone wouldn't work and I—didn't dare go to him."

She wavered, and Deering moved quickly to her side, but she steadied herself.

"I—didn't dare go!" she whispered, speaking with difficulty. "And he needed me! If I'd—warned him, he might have run away!"

She was close upon the verge of collapse. Deering inspected her with cool eyes for an instant, then adopted the

one tone that would make her steady herself.

"Do you mean you believe Hal committed that murder?" he demanded angrily. "If that's the best you can think of him—"

"I don't!" She turned tortured eyes upon him. "I don't believe it! But he had so much reason to! Hal loves me! He'd have killed Howard if I hadn't stopped him! He was defending me—"

"You don't believe Hal is a murderer," repeated Deering coldly, "and yet you'd have advised him to run away. Don't you know that would have damned him completely? He'd have been a fugitive for the rest of his life."

"I—wouldn't have cared. I'd have saved him!" She seemed to get a fresh hold upon herself. "I'd have given in to the blackmailer, to save Hal!" she told Deering fiercely. "I'd even have paid this last awful thing he asks, if I could. Do you think I would hold back anything I possess if I could save him?"

"Then why let Hal progress to the point of murder rather than pay, to gain time at any rate?" demanded Deering brutally. "If you care for him so much, why not pay once more?"

"I'd do it—if I could!" With a little, tortured cry she thrust the letter into his fingers. "Read that! And I'd do even that for Hal, if I only could!"

Deering smoothed out the bit of paper. He read. Huge, straggling, printed characters covered the sheet. There was absolutely no clew as to the sender. Even in the phrasing there were no errors or peculiarities. It was a letter that might have been written by any of a million men, had they wished to put on paper what the letter contained.

"The blackmailer," said Deering

slowly, as he folded it up again, "tells you that Hal will be arrested to-day, since you have refused to accede to his demands. He promises to produce evidence that even yet will free Hal if you—marry him."

"And I would! I would! I'd do anything for Hal, if I only could!"

"Just a moment, Miss Hill," said Deering, more gently. "This letter changes things around a bit. I've got to do a little thinking."

With his hands behind his back, he began to pace nervously up and down the room, his forehead corrugated.

"I didn't expect this," he said, "I didn't think he'd have the nerve Confound the man! I'm going to see him hung!" A turn, and he strode back again. "Doctor Hollenden," he said abruptly, "put up a plausible case to prove that your uncle had murdered Drake; to save you from marriage to him. That the wax figure was to make people ready to accept an anonymous confession, probably telling where Drake was buried. I will be frank with you. Wanting to close up the affair without any publicity, because of this infernal blackmailing matter, I had planned to have you pay the man his final sum. I'd have loaned it you—and then I planned to get it back from him. He would, I thought, have sent in a confession that he had killed Drake, and I would be able to prove that he had written and signed the confession. If he attempted to bother you again, I could hang him on that."

He struck his hands together angrily.

"That would have fixed up the whole thing," he said irritably. "Drake would have been proved dead, you could marry Hal, and no one but the three of us, and the blackmailer would know the truth. I am a fool,

perhaps, but I'm fond of Hal. And sooner or later I'd have been able to get something on the scoundrel and put him behind the bars for something else. I was willing to ignore my plain duty to the law for the sake of you and Hal. But this is too much!"

He was plainly in a cold murderous rage.

"He has proved that Drake is dead," he said icily, "and having bled you and Hal for a year and a half, he planned to marry you and live on the inheritance you'll get since Drake is proved dead. Damn that man! And he might have got away with it."

"No," whispered Alice. She had sunk into a chair. "No! I couldn't have married him. I—Hal and I—we were secretly married over a year ago. We loved each other, and this blackmailer made us feel that we were doomed, anyway."

Deering stared at her.

"Great guns! And so Hal was going to commit suicide to protect you in your income, because he thought that if he were arrested you'd proclaim the marriage, and would lose everything without being able to save him!"

He put his hands to his head.

"And I thought I was a detective! Miss Hill, I apologize to you! I thought you cared more for money than for Hal. I humble myself. I am a triple-plated idiot! Some day I'm going to ask you to forgive me, when we have more time. But in the meantime I'm going to get Hal out of jail. And I'm going to get him out in a hurry!"

He started for the door, then halted and whirled.

"There's one more thing," he said softly, his eyes gleaming unpleasantly. "I can prove a great deal on our friend the blackmailer, but I'd like to prove

just one thing more. Where was this fight of Hal's? Where was he when he hit Drake on the jaw?"

"I—I'd have to show you."

"Can you stand it, Miss Hill? Or," he added in a different tone, "Mrs. Walker, I should say."

"I can do anything."

"I believe you."

He waited patiently while she was gone, upon his face an expression of many emotions, and in his eyes reflective admiration.

She drove around to the front of the house perhaps five minutes later in a small roadster. Deering climbed in beside her. She was very pale, but her lips were compressed resolutely.

"Good girl!" said Deering warmly. "You have got nerve, after all."

"I—I want to see Hal—quickly," she told him quietly. "You say you can get him out of jail. I'll try to help you. But if you can't. I'm going to see him anyway."

"Where's this place you're going to take me to?"

"On the other side of town."

"I wish you'd drive slowly down the main street," said Deering. "I thought I'd need one or more of the men from my office, and had two in the next town. I wired for them some time ago. They may be here."

Obediently, she sent the machine crawling down the small business section. Deering touched her arm when they were opposite the single hotel the town boasted.

"I'll get out here, if I may."

He signaled with his hand, and a lounge in front of the hotel crossed the street. For four or five minutes Deering talked earnestly, then scribbled a note, and finally went into a store, where Alice could see him talking over the telephone.

"Right!" he said in some satisfaction, as he came back. "Now for the scene of the fight. I haven't much hope, but it's too good a chance to ignore."

Through the town to the main road beyond, and Alice stopped the machine.

"We were in that little copse there," she told him, pointing to a small thicket of pine trees where a dilapidated soft drink stand, long since abandoned, displayed tattered banners and rusting signs to the breeze. "It was the night before I was to—marry Howard. And I loved Hal. I went out to meet him, because my heart was breaking. And—we'd met each other at a picnic here. I shouldn't have gone, I suppose, but Hal was desperate and I was going to beg him to go away for awhile until—until after he'd forgotten about me."

Deering went up and looked over the ground keenly. There was no grass growing there. The place had once been graveled and the earth was barren for a long space about. It was curiously desolate.

"You stood there," he said suddenly.

"Y-yes," she said faintly.

"And Drake came upon you, talking to Hal, from behind the soft drink stand."

"N-no, he came up the path from the road, just as we did a moment ago."

Deering looked here and there, frowning. He left her and went into the soft-drink stand. He came out again and peered under the few rotting benches.

"It's such a long chance," he said doubtfully. "Is this place much used?"

"No. Hardly anybody comes here now. We were the first picnic in a long time, two years ago. And the others were disappointed in it. But Hal and I didn't notice. We'd—just met each other."

Deering cast about again, anxiously, then for the second time went into the tumble-down refreshment stand. Alice heard him give a little exclamation of satisfaction. He came out with a tiny triangle of glass in his hand.

"I don't know whether this is worth anything or not," he said cheerfully, "but it will give me deuced good material for a bluff, anyway. Let's go back to town."

"I'm—anxious to see Hal."

"Not yet," said Deering. "We want to stop at the watch-maker's. I seem to remember seeing his sign. And then we'll stop by for Dr. Hollenden. He's the coroner. He'll hold an inquest over something we found this morning, and I want to tip him off."

"Will it help Hal?"

"It ought to," said Deering, smiling. "The doctor was disturbed by all the evidence that piled up against him."

"He—didn't like Hal, I thought," protested Alice, uncertainly. "He said, the other day—"

"Never mind." Deering seemed to be pleased about something. "He'll change his mind."

The little roadster hummed back toward the town. The distance, after all, was not far. Again the shaded streets with their atmosphere of quiet, and the oddly contrasting, glaring little business section of two full squares of stores.

"And we stop here," reminded Deering, as the sign of the watch-maker, jeweler, optician and silver-smith—all trades in one—showed before them.

He was inside a full ten minutes, and Alice looked nervous and anxious when he came out. But he was smiling more broadly than before.

"Now the doctor's, and then we'll see Hal," he said.

Her face was beginning to be more and more drawn when they stopped still again, this time before Dr. Hollenden's comfortable home.

"You'll come in?" asked Deering, pausing on the running-board.

"No. I'm anxious to get to Hal—"

"I won't be long," promised Deering.

VIII

HE pushed the bell and was ushered into the hall. The doctor's voice sounded from the second floor.

"Who's there? Deering? Come on up. Charley has something to say to you."

His chuckle, following, was plainly audible. Deering ascended the stairs.

"As a matter of fact, doctor," he said, pausing in the doorway of the littered study, "I came to ask you if you'd care to toddle down to the jail with me."

"As a friend, or as a prisoner?" inquired the doctor, chuckling.

He was seated at the piled-up table, or rather seated beside it. His feet were resting comfortably upon a copy of the "Materia Medica," and he had a large black cigar in his hand. Evidently he was indulging in amiable meditation. The articulated skeleton, in one corner, surveyed him and Deering, at the door, with a curious, ghastly amusement.

"I've been talking to Charley," said the doctor, waving his hand toward his gruesome companion. "And Charley has been uttering words of wisdom."

"Such as what?"

"Charley doesn't believe Walker killed Drake," announced the doctor with every appearance of seriousness. His eyes twinkled as Deering looked blank. "Charley says, *cherchez la femme*."

"Look for the woman? But what woman is there in the case?"

"I don't know," the doctor confessed, "but I've been developing a theory. Like every one, I've always craved to be a detective. And I have my chance."

Deering seemed to forget about Alice, waiting outside.

"What is the theory?"

"Simply this," said the doctor promptly. "Howard Drake, you tell me, had something in his pocket initialed 'E. H.' instead of 'H. D.' From that you deduce that the murderer's initials were 'E. H.' and the thing was put in his pocket by accident. 'E. H.' happens to be Judge Hill's monogram. But my dear fellow, suppose you want to clip a cigar and haven't a penknife or a cigar-cutter with you. What would you do?"

"Bite off the end," said Deering.

"Nonsense." The doctor shook his head seriously. "You'd borrow one, and very possibly forget to return it. It might remain in your pockets for a week. You might be murdered, and some detective might say: 'Aha! These are the initials of the murderer!' Eh?"

"I never say 'Aha!'" protested Deering, smiling again. "But you're right as far as you go."

"And that's all the evidence you have against the judge," the doctor continued, warming to his subject. "The case against Walker ought, by all the rules, to fall to the ground. His camp is isolated. An excellent place for a rendezvous. He might have let Drake borrow it for a week-end, quite innocently, and have forgotten all about it, or Drake, knowing that Walker would be in town, might have simply gone out there and preempted it. Isn't that so?"

"But Walker has an admitted motive," said Deering. "I hate to believe in it, but he was attentive to Miss Hill, and she was to have been married the next day—to Drake. Most men would feel like murder, whether they committed it or not, seeing the woman they loved about to marry another man, and that man a beast."

"Aha!" said the doctor amiably. "But how about a woman seeing the man she loved about to marry another woman? Consider! Suppose Drake had engaged to meet this woman at Walker's place. Suppose she demanded that he refrain from marrying Alice. Suppose they quarreled, and she shot him? What then?"

"Well," asked Deering. "What then?"

"Assume an excitable woman. She has killed the man she loves. You know something of feminine psychology. What do women do? They keep trifles, souvenirs, mementos of the dead and weep over them. This woman is especially feminine. She has a wax image of her dead lover made. She enshrines it in some secret place, perhaps, playing up the drama of the situation, weeping over him, putting flowers upon him, luxuriating, in short, in the drama of the situation."

"A bit far-fetched, but possible," agreed Deering.

"And after a time she grows bored. A new lover appears, perhaps. She wishes to be rid of the thing. Some lingering remnant of feeling remains. She sends the wax image to Alice, as if to say: 'After all, you didn't get him! I killed him. That for you!' and so on. Isn't that just like a woman?"

"It's conceivable," agreed Deering.

"Then," said the doctor positively, "either the matter will drop here and now, with absolutely nothing more

from the mysterious writer of anonymous letters, or else one more letter will come, when the writer will confess that she—not he, but she—is the murderess of Drake, and the matter will be finished.”

“There’s just one difficulty,” said Deering, smiling. “The wax figure would have to be retouched, in two years. A warm day would melt it.”

“I remember, the sheriff thought it was kept in cold storage. But he wired all the cold storage places. What did he find? Nothing!”

“Oh, yes. He found it had been kept in a furrier’s cold storage vault.”

The doctor stared.

“The devil!” he said irritably. “There goes my theory. I shall suspect you next, Deering, or else myself.”

“Miss Hill’s waiting for us,” Deering told him. “In confidence, I have air-tight cases against half the prominent citizens in town.”

The doctor rose slowly to his feet.

“Confound you, Deering,” he grumbled. “I spent a solid hour on that theory, and I still think I’m right about the possibility of that article, whatever it was, in Drake’s pockets being merely borrowed from the judge.”

“I grant you that.” Deering seemed to be in some haste now. “But Miss Hill has been waiting for us, and she’s naturally anxious to reach Hal. He’s been in jail for a good three hours.”

“Alice is a fine girl,” declared the doctor, reaching for his hat. “I’m hanged, if they hang Walker, if I don’t set out after her myself. She wouldn’t make half a bad wife for me.”

Deering smiled dryly and held open the door.

She was tapping her foot impatiently on the floor of the car.

“Mr. Deering,” she called, while they were yet halfway from the house.

“Please hurry! I must see Hal! I simply must! I didn’t think you’d be so long!”

“All set, now,” said Deering. “The doctor’s coming with us. We’ll have Hal out of jail in no time.”

“Eh?” demanded the doctor. “How’re you going to manage it, Deering?”

Deering shot him a warning glance.

“It may be a few days before everything’s settled,” he said quietly, “but I can put up a little cash for bail, and it’s hardly likely they’ll refuse that.”

“Personally,” said the doctor emphatically, as the car shot swiftly through the streets, “it’s my opinion that if Walker is innocent, he’d better stay in jail until our anonymous correspondent has a chance to write again. Maybe he’ll confess, next.”

“As to that—pardon me, doctor.” Deering had put his elbow in the portly physician’s ribs. “It’s crowded in here with three of us. As to that, though, I shall suspect the confounded son-of-a-gun until he comes out in the open.”

“And you mark my words,” the doctor said positively, “you won’t ever find out who it is. I have a hunch. You know my original suspicions, Deering. If it’s that man—blah! Your case will trail away into thin air.”

Alice had been driving swiftly and silently, and now drew up with a jerk at the curb. Deering touched her arm.

“You’ll have to get permission from the sheriff, Miss Hill, to visit Hal. He’ll give it to you, without doubt, though.”

She bit her lip, and followed him into the sheriff’s office. But she stopped short inside the room, her face growing a shade paler. The room was crowded with people. Two deputies—the men who had made the excursion to

Walker's cabin that morning—stood against the wall. The prosecuting attorney sat by the window, smoking a huge cigar. He took it out of his mouth and stood up hastily when she appeared. The sheriff was scratching his head in what appeared to be hopeless puzzlement, as he talked in a wholly amicable fashion with Walker, the man he had arrested earlier in the day. Even Judge Hill sat pompously in one corner.

"Hal!" Ignoring all considerations of time or place, or those who might be looking, Alice went quickly to him the instant she saw him. Her movement was so impulsive and so generous that his arm went about her instinctively, and she faced the others in the room with something of defiance.

The sheriff ignored the by-play. He turned to Deering with a hopeless gesture.

"Mr. Deering," he said helplessly, "you threw a bomb into me when you telephoned. I measured, like you said, and I'm hanged if it don't look right, but I'm all up in the air."

"Dr. Hollenden will measure, perhaps," suggested Deering. "But I am perfectly confident that the matter is as I said."

Walker smiled shakily at Deering.

"Wonders will never cease, old fellow," he said uncertainly. "You could have knocked me over with a feather. I thought it was all over but the shouting."

"What's happened?" demanded Alice anxiously. "What is it, Hal?"

The sheriff answered, in his tone bewilderment mingled with admiration.

"Mr. Deering telephoned me, and I measured and found out he was right," he said hopelessly. "I measured the skull of the skeleton we dug up on Mr. Walker's place to-day, with the bullet hole in it, and it isn't Drake's!"

There was a silence for a moment.

"It wasn't? Then—then—" Alice stammered. "How do you know? Are you certain?" she added quickly. "You can't prosecute Hal without a body. I know that. It's *corpus delicti*. I looked it up."

The sheriff ran his hands through his hair.

"Yes, ma'am! I know it, too. And it's got me all mixed up again. I don't know whether Drake is dead or not. Because the skull we dug up to-day, where that anonymous letter said we'd find Drake's body, has measurements that can't be those of the skull of a white man. They're the measurements of the skull of a Japanese."

IX

DEERING grinned, and sat down comfortably. He nodded amiably to Walker, whose arm was still about Alice's waist. There was a thick cloud of smoke in the room, and the atmosphere was none too clear, but it was easy to see that it had become heavenly to Alice, just at that moment.

"Then Hal's free!" she cried joyously. "Maybe Howard is still alive! Maybe, even, Hal—"

A startled expression came over her face. She looked at Deering.

"Mr. Deering! Do you think it could be Howard that was—was doing what Hal and I asked about?"

Deering shook his head, smiling.

"I don't care!" she cried. "I don't care about anything, if only Hal—"

"Hal, you son-of-a-gun," said Deering affectionately, "take Miss Hill outside for a breath of air before she tells us things she shouldn't. And I want a smoke. We'll want you two back in here after a bit, but in the meantime, don't worry! I repeat it. *Don't worry!*"

They crossed the room together. Deering had his pipe out as the door closed behind them, and was filling it, with a dry smile upon his good-natured face. The sheriff stared at him helplessly.

"What 're we going to do, Mr. Deering? I wish to the Lord I'd never heard of that blamed wax figure, now."

Deering scratched a match and lit his pipe.

"Oh, you might regard anonymous letters with a good deal of suspicion, from now on," he smiled. "But the case hasn't ceased to be important. Did my men get that paper I telephoned about, do you know?"

"They got it," the sheriff told him. "I'd have thought you'd gone crazy if it hadn't been that you haven't missed a bet yet." He ran his hands through his hair again, helplessly. "I can't see that there's even been a crime committed."

Deering held up two fingers.

"First, there is a corpse with a bullet through its head. A crime has been committed. Second, the man who made the wax figure says he modeled it from a dead body."

The doctor sat down heavily.

"Deering," he complained, "you knew this stuff and let me spin fool theories to you without telling me! That wasn't fair!"

"Your theorizing was very helpful, doctor." Deering puffed silently for a moment or so. "I'm waiting," he said mildly, "for my men to get back. I hope they'll bring me some information. In the meantime, we might get the whole thing as clear as we can."

Judge Hill stirred, from his corner.

"It seems to me, sir," he said, with some indignation, "that it would have been wisest for you to confine your efforts to tracing the ghastly practical

joke that we originally requested you to investigate. Apparently you have greatly exceeded your commission, sir!"

"The sheriff traced the figure," said Deering patiently. "I was busy tracing the man who sent it."

"Who was it, Deering, and why did he do it?" The doctor was vexed. "All this mystery—"

"To use your own terms, doctor, I refuse to make my diagnosis until my case-history is complete. In other words, I'd rather not name my man until I have all the evidence against him. You see, I have so much evidence that right now I could name at least three men with some probability of being right."

The sheriff sighed heavily.

"Well, Mr. Deering," he said despondently, "suppose you tell us your side of the matter."

"It's moderately simple," said Deering reflectively. "We start at the arrival of the wax figure. It came in the middle of Miss Hill's birthday party—a ghastly, gruesome thing that might have been a practical joke, as the judge considered, or might have been a boast by the criminal, as the doctor suggested just now to me, or that might have been a threat, if it had been intelligible. All of us seemed to agree that it was designed to rearouse public interest in Drake's disappearance."

"This is getting nowhere, sir," protested the judge, indignantly. "The thing to do was to find the miscreant, not to theorize about his motive."

"It's a professional habit," admitted Deering, "that ought to be stopped. But it is a habit. I ask your indulgence. It occurred to me—only to-day, I must confess—that there was another possible interpretation. Most

people had forgotten Drake's disappearance. A few still remembered it. I thought that just possibly—just barely possibly—the wax figure was sent, not to raise the case again, and only that, but to settle it for all time."

The doctor nodded profoundly.

"I told you that, only in another way, Deering."

"You did, doctor. I see it now, but I did not at the time. Let us suppose a case. Suppose there was a man who wanted people to know definitely that Drake was dead. He was not content that they should believe it, but he needed them to know it. The affair had slipped from most people's minds. He wanted it finished, finally completed. It was necessary from every possible point of view that there should be no doubt about it. He had foreseen from the moment of the crime that eventually the world would have to be convinced that Drake was dead. Perhaps he only realized it some time—an hour, say, afterward. He would not want to confess, this murderer who had just killed his man."

"It isn't yet certain that Drake is dead," interjected the prosecuting attorney, from the window. "We have only the word of the model maker for that."

"I hope to prove it presently," said Deering.

"And why should any one find it necessary to have the world quite certain that Drake was dead?" demanded the doctor.

Deering deliberately knocked out his pipe, and instantly filled it again. He said nothing. There was a curious silence in the room. Every man present knew of the absurd conditions of the bequest that had been left to Alice Hill. To every man, simultaneously, came the same idea.

"You mean," said the prosecuting attorney slowly, "that he might plan to marry Miss Hill. He would want her to inherit—"

"Walker!" grunted the doctor.

Deering smiled. At the same instant the door opened and Walker and Alice came in. Alice was radiant.

"We've just convicted you all over again, Hal," said Deering, dryly.

Walker laughed.

"Go ahead, Tom," he said cheerfully, "I'll trust you to acquit me again."

"I may have to tell all your secrets, though."

"Go ahead!" cried Alice, her eyes shining. "I don't care. We'll manage some way!"

"I feel better," said Deering. He adjusted the stem of his pipe. "To resume," he went on, "this man who had murdered Drake saw that he would have to have some startling thing, far in the future, that would help him. Sheriff, if you had had an anonymous letter come in confessing to the murder of Howard Drake, what would you have thought?"

"Probably that it was some crank," admitted the sheriff.

"You see there is a motive for the wax figure," Deering pointed out. "No one would doubt it much if some anonymous person confessed now?"

"We're still minus the body," pointed out the prosecuting attorney.

Deering waved his hand.

"A trifle," he commented soberly. "We'll have it presently. I consider the wax figure explained—"

"With Walker here still under suspicion—" the doctor began.

Again the door opened, and two men appeared on the threshold. Deering stood up.

"Come in." He turned to the others.

"These are two of my operatives. You know I run a criminal investigation bureau in New York. They've just been cleaning up some details for me. You got the stuff?"

"Yes, sir, all of it."

The man handed over a bulky package. Deering felt through the wrappings and nodded in satisfaction.

"Now we can go ahead faster," said Deering contentedly. "Let's make this official, in a way. Warning to everybody. Whatever you say will be used against you. Hal, take the stand, old chap."

Walker smiled.

"Fire away."

"When did you last see Howard Drake?" demanded Deering in businesslike tones.

"In my cabin, up in the hills."

"When was this?"

"About twelve o'clock of the night he disappeared."

There was a sudden element of tension in the room. The doctor sat up sharply. Judge Hill gasped and stared. The prosecuting attorney leaned forward, instantly intent. The sheriff stared from Deering to Walker and back again.

"Go back to the beginning of the evening, Hal," Deering commanded. "When had you first met him that day?"

"At about eight o'clock," said Walker, less promptly than before.

"When, and where?"

Walker hesitated. Alice touched his elbow, and whispered in his ear. He set his lips, looked at Deering steadily, and answered evenly:

"At an old picnic ground about half a mile out of town. It was probably eight o'clock."

"Who was with you at the time?"

"I was," said Alice clearly. She

smiled at Deering as if to say that without understanding she trusted him, and in any event would stand by Walker in telling the whole truth at last.

"Thanks," said Deering laconically.

"Why were you there?"

"Alice," said Walker evenly, "was to be married the next day to a beast and a swine. I had begged her to meet me. I was pleading with her not to marry him, because I loved her and knew she would be unhappy with him."

"Why did you select the picnic grounds?" demanded Deering.

"We were walking," said Walker grimly. "We did not really realize where we were going. When we reached that place, I remembered that we had first met each other at that spot. I thought that perhaps she would be more apt to listen to me there."

"How long did you stand there?"

"Perhaps twenty minutes, before Drake appeared."

"How did that happen?" Deering dropped his inquisitorial air. "Tell the whole thing, Hal. I guarantee to get you out of trouble."

"He came up the path," said Walker evenly. "He seemed astonished to see us, then enraged. He began to curse violently. Alice was to have married him the next day. He would listen to no explanations, but swore that he would marry her—just for the money he would gain by doing it—and then tell publicly that he had seen us there, adding enough details to blast her reputation forever. He could have done it, of course. It was indiscreet for me to have led her to such a secluded spot, but it was indiscreet for me to have asked her to talk to me the night before her marriage anyhow."

"I know," said Deering. "But it was pretty natural, from what they say

of Drake. Most men would have tried to stop the wedding. What did you do when Drake insulted Miss Hill?"

"I hit him," said Walker coldly. "And I'd do it again."

X

THERE was a stir. The sheriff jumped. The prosecuting attorney leaned forward.

"This is mighty interesting to me," he said slowly, "but it's only fair to Mr. Walker to tell him I can use this statement as evidence against him."

Deering nodded impatiently.

"A little more, Hal. What then?"

"I bent over him. I was raging, and at the same time I felt utterly helpless. I had knocked him out."

"You didn't notice how he was breathing, or anything else?"

"Not then."

"And after that?"

"Miss Hill—Alice—was shocked and horrified. I took her to her home. She was too much upset to be able to make any decision, but she half promised not to marry him unless he withdrew his threats. She would marry me instead, at whatever sacrifice to herself."

"And then you went back?"

"Yes," said Walker, "I went back. I looked for him on the road, expecting to meet him. I was in a towering rage. I intended to tell him that if Alice did marry him and he did carry out his threats, that I would shoot him like a dog."

His jaw was grimly set. It was easy to see that he had meant it.

"And you found?" said Deering gently.

"He was lying in the same spot, breathing heavily. It frightened me."

"The same spot?" insisted Deering.

"I can't be absolutely sure, of

course. It was moonlight and not very clear, but it seemed to be the same spot. His breath came—well, like that of a man who was very drunk. I thought he was drunk, for a moment. But I struck a match and saw that he had a gash on his forehead. He must have struck a stone, embedded in the ground, as he fell."

"You hit him from the front?" queried Deering.

"Of course. On the jaw."

"How was he lying? Face down or on his back?"

"Why, on his back. I could see the gash clearly by the light of the match."

Deering turned to the others in the room.

"I'd like to point out," he said mildly, "that there are no large stones in the neighborhood of the picnic ground. It is paved with gravel, where the fight took place."

"You mean murder!" cried Judge Hill indignantly, "Alice—"

"Easy!" said Deering quietly. "I'm not through yet. Doctor, I ask your evidence. If you hit a man on the jaw and knock him unconscious, is he apt to turn up with a cut from a stone on his forehead?"

The doctor considered. He seemed much perturbed.

"If it were a glancing blow," he admitted, "it might be that he would turn in falling and strike on his face."

"But if he were knocked unconscious, would he be able to turn over upon his back?"

"N-no," admitted the doctor uncertainly. "I hardly think so. Of course he might have recovered partial consciousness, turned over, and then relapsed."

"What sort of injury, associated with a gashed forehead, is apt to make a man breathe 'like a drunken man'?"

The doctor hesitated.

"It—well, it sounds like a fractured skull," he said at last.

"Right." Deering turned. "Go on, Hal."

"I hesitated. I could not leave him there, because he was evidently badly hurt. I could not take him into town, because he would tell who had struck him and the cause. I did not know what to do. At last, desperate, I realized that at least I could gain time for Alice—put off that horrible wedding for a few days, at least. I went back to town and got my motor car—I've sold it since—and took him up to my cabin. I made a light and discovered that he was more badly hurt than I had thought. There was a deep gash at least three inches long in his forehead. I decided that at any cost I had to get a doctor for him."

"Just a moment." Deering addressed the others again. "Please remember that Hal is saying that there was a deep gash, three inches long, on Drake's forehead. He hit him only with his fist, and there was only gravel on the ground. Further, Dr. Hollenden assures us that the heavy breathing, at any rate, was a symptom of a fractured skull. Now go ahead, Hal."

"I went to get a doctor. I only knew of one near by. I called for him, but there was no answer. I learned later that he was away on his vacation. Desperate, and afraid that Drake would die at any minute, I resolved to take him back to town to be attended to. Rather than commit a murder, I would have to admit that I had injured him and stand the consequences. I went back to my cabin—"

"And found nothing but ashes and glowing embers," finished Deering. "You thought a lamp had overturned or a stove exploded, or something of

the sort. That will be all for the moment, Hal."

He refilled his pipe carefully, and lighted it.

"How did Drake happen to be at the picnic ground?" he inquired generally. "I'm rather puzzled, gentlemen. And how does it happen that he had this injury in front when he was struck on the jaw with Hal's fist, and nothing else, and there were no stones about to cut him? What would you say, doctor?"

The doctor looked up.

"I'm afraid I'd say it was impossible—that I did not believe it."

"Precisely! Impossible!" said Deering in satisfaction. "And yet it happened! But suppose Drake already had an appointment to meet some one at the picnic grounds. Suppose he encountered Hal here and Miss Hill instead. Suppose that the event took place as Hal has related it. Drake recovered after Hal left. He met this other person. They quarreled. This unknown other person struck him down, say, with a blackjack. On Hal's return he would find Drake in the condition he describes, without having done the injury himself."

The doctor looked up again.

"Something tells me, Deering," he commented, "that you're going to suppose that this other person was a woman, who also objected to his marriage."

"It's all supposing," said Judge Hill angrily. "You've no atom of proof of all this. Walker, there, is guilty of murder! I'll swear to his warrant myself!"

Deering ignored the interruption.

"Hal's return interrupted the other man. The other man, it may be, was hiding in the old soft drink stand on the picnic grounds. He saw Hal's

agitation. He could see that Hal believed he had done the whole thing. What would he do? Naturally, he'd wait. Perhaps he could get out of the affair altogether. Perhaps—if he were a certain type of man—he would see possible advantage to himself in the matter."

"This is all very interesting," said the prosecuting attorney quietly. "But, Mr. Deering, you have made no proof of the presence of a second party, and you have made it necessary to rearrest Mr. Walker for felonious assault, at any rate."

"Except that a fist is not a deadly weapon, except by law in the State of Texas. I'd like to finish my argument, however. I assume that Hal, taking Drake to his camp, was followed in another car, or possibly a motor cycle with a sidecar. Hal left the camp to go for a doctor. In his absence the murderer went in. Discovering his victim still alive, he finished him off with a bullet. During the time he had had for reflection, he saw a chance, let us imagine—for blackmail. He took the body, knowing Hal would suspect himself of murder. He fired the cabin to cover the abstraction of the body."

"This is highly plausible," commented the doctor smiling, "but, my dear Deering, you don't expect us to believe it?"

"And why not?"

"You yourself," said the doctor. "point out that the only body we have—that skeleton we dug up this morning—has the skull of a Japanese. Yet you hypothecate that some person unknown shot Drake. Walker says he hit him with his fist—"

"We have no definite proof," interrupted the prosecuting attorney again, "that Drake is dead. Not one of us here but believes he is dead, but in a

case of *corpus delicti* the courts are helpless."

Deering paused reflectively. His eyes went over the room meditatively. His hand groped for the bundle his men had brought him a little while before.

"Miss Hill," he said gently, "if I were you I'd look out of the window. You see, the body we dug up this morning did happen to be Drake's. It simply happened that the skull wasn't Drake's. It was not *corpus delicti*, but *caput delicti*—a rather interesting distinction. And I have the missing article here."

He tore at the wrapping paper. White, polished bone showed through.

XI

EXCEPT for Deering's own two men, the expressions of the different people in the room were so many different expressions of amazed bewilderment. The sheriff's eyes popped. The prosecuting attorney's eyes grew shrewd. Judge Hill turned, first, pale and then red. Dr. Hollenden grew, first, red and then pale. Walker started violently, and he quickly put his arm about Alice and led her toward a window.

"You know my hypothesis of the crime now," said Deering. "The murder was done by some one who was to meet Drake. He was waiting for Drake when Hal and Alice appeared. He probably heard their entire conversation there. And I have reason to think that he was a professional blackmailer, since he has been blackmailing Hal ever since, up to the present time, and it is reasonable to believe he had some similar hold upon Drake. The wax figure, then, was partly a means of proving his power to raise the case again when Hal re-

belled against his demands, and partly due to the other motive I have mentioned."

"Mr. Deering!" Judge Hill rose to his feet indignantly. "It is my opinion, sir, that you are talking nonsense! You—"

Deering went on calmly, ignoring the interruption altogether.

"It was the habit of the blackmailer to telephone in his demands to Miss Hill, who communicated them to Hal. I smashed Judge Hill's telephone—you will have to pardon me for that, judge—for the purpose of getting a little specimen of the blackmailer's handwriting. True enough, he wrote to Miss Hill when he failed to reach her by wire. I am prepared to prove that the blackmailer was the same man as the person who wrote the anonymous letters. Further, I think I can prove that he first fractured Drake's skull with a blackjack and then shot him. And—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Dr. Hollenden impatiently. "Deering, you've shown some brains, but you've gone crazy with the heat. You've stood up there talking for half an hour. Nobody knows what you're talking about. Come! Who was the murderer of Howard Drake if your friend Walker wasn't?"

"Why," said Deering mildly, "you were."

Without exception, every man in the place jumped.

"Your real name," said Deering deliberately, "is Jamison. You were expelled from the medical profession and imprisoned for using knowledge gained in patients' confidences for blackmailing purposes.

"You were blackmailing Drake. You first stunned him and later killed him precisely as I mentioned."

Dr. Hollenden, very pale, broke into a hoarse laugh.

"Deering, I'll have you committed for insanity! You're mad!"

"Not a bit of it," said Deering imperturbably. "Hal sent for me to find the blackmailer. I picked on you the first night I was in town, because you shouted, 'My God! Get the women away!' before Hal had exposed the ghastly wax figure at all. You knew what was in the box before any one else did, before it was opened."

"You're mad!"

"Also," said Deering evenly, "you have devised several excellent explanations of the wax figure mystery, each of them leading to an impasse. You were convinced that it would trail off to nothing. You were a little too much convinced, as if you had inside knowledge."

"This is ridiculous!" cried the doctor angrily. "I call on all of you to witness this! I shall sue him for criminal libel! Me, a blackmailer!"

"Worse than that, doctor," said Deering good-naturedly. "A whole lot worse. You're a murderer."

"You are making very rash statements," the doctor told him in a simmering, seething rage. "Do you realize that you have not a trace of proof of all this?"

"Oh, yes I have," said Deering, with sudden grimness. "You didn't stun Drake without a fight at the picnic grounds. He smashed your glasses for you. That's why you hid when Hal came back. You'd have faced him and accused him of the whole thing then and there otherwise. And I've found fragments of eyeglass lens in the old refreshment stand that I've had the local oculist measure, and he tells me they are yours. I can prove your presence in the stand."

"Wonderful!" cried the doctor sarcastically. "And on that very night, of course!"

"And you must remember that the skull on the skeleton we dug up to-day is that of a Japanese. It was a white man's body with a Jap's head. I'm prepared to point out as an interesting coincidence that the skeleton in your study is that of a Japanese, with a white man's head. I'm prepared to prove that that head is Drake's!"

The doctor's face grew purple.

"Prove it! Prove it!" he shouted.

"Easy enough," said Deering easily. "I can point to the head right here. Gentlemen, my two operatives swore out a search warrant and looked for evidence in Dr. Hollenden's home as soon as they had seen me get him out of the house. I was bringing him here. This is the head of 'Charley,' the skeleton Dr. Hollenden displayed on every possible occasion, with a whimsical yarn of some sort accompanying. It will take a careful examination, but you will discover that there have been two repairs made to the bone of the forehead. One is the covering up of the signs of a fracture, in itself enough to cause eventual death. The other is the filling in of a bullet hole, and a bullet hole of a size that would be made by this revolver, which belongs to Dr. Hollenden. The doctor had killed Drake with his own weapon. In letting the body be found, he wished it to have signs which would point unmistakably to Hal. With Hal's gun he put a hole in the forehead of the Japanese skull—a medical specimen. He put Hal's gun in the ruins of the cabin. He put the skull with the rest of the body—probably only a month or so ago—and Drake's skull he repaired and mounted on his original specimen. He had to, because Charley would have been

missed by some visitor if minus a head, or missing from the doctor's study. Is that clear?"

The doctor clamped his teeth. Little specks of foam appeared on his lips.

"There's so much evidence against him it's tiresome," said Deering wearily. "Hal's gun—well, if it had been loaded when it went through the fire that blackened its metal and consumed its stock, the cartridges on exploding would have shattered it to bits. Certainly fragments of the bullets would have been inside the cylinder. It isn't at all impossible that we'll find those bullets somewhere about the doctor's house, probably in his study. And I can prove that the doctor wrote blackmailing letters to Miss Hill, and the anonymous letter to the sheriff, disclosing the location of Drake's body. The first day I called on you, doctor, I dropped a bit of a certain chemical in your ink-well. Naturally I can swear to it. And that chemical will give its traces in the ink of your anonymous and blackmailing notes. We've got you there, certainly."

The doctor was not a pretty specimen. His face purple with rage, he made a sudden wild rush at Deering, uttering a sound that was like nothing else as much as it was like the snarl of a wild beast about to seize its prey. But Deering's two men, and the two deputies, flung themselves upon him. Despite his apparently maniacal strength, he was subdued.

Deering watched imperturbably. When they had half dragged, half carried the doctor to the door, he went on evenly.

"He's devilish clever, and it's no wonder he's angry. As the blackmailer, he had demanded that Miss Hill marry him as the price of Hal's life. It's only natural for him to be disappointed

when as good a scheme as he had is smashed up. Sheriff, I suggest that you see if you can't get him identified by the clerks at Bernstein's, where he put the figure in for storage. Then see if the old wax modeler will recognize him. All of us are morally certain that he killed Drake all right, and most juries would agree. But if you don't expect conviction, I suspect that this will clinch your case for you. I was crowded in the car with the doctor, coming here, and I heard paper rustling in his pocket. Expecting to have some sign that Miss Hill was going to sacrifice herself to save Hal from hanging, he was all prepared for the last act of his play, when he would have convinced every one that Drake had been murdered by some ancient enemy—probably a woman—and would be safely married to Miss Hill, with a fair-sized fortune to spend."

Deering tossed a square envelope on the table. The sheriff picked it up, ripped it open, and nodded grimly.

"You're right," he said after an instant. "It's a confession, unsigned!"

"And I can use it against him," snapped the prosecuting attorney. "With proof that he wrote it, your word that it was in his pocket, and the rest of this evidence, the man is as good as dead! He'll be hanged without fail."

Deering smiled sleepily, as if he were tired. He even yawned.

"Oh, well," he said relievedly, "I thank the Lord I'm finished! Hal, let's you and I and Miss Hill go and have a soda in law-abiding celebration of our triumph."

Smilingly deaf to anything else, declining the sheriff's almost impassioned plea that he remain and tell him how he went about the process of unraveling the mystery, he led them out of the courthouse.

"My Lord!" he chuckled. "Wasn't the doctor surprised? I say, aren't his initials 'E. H.'? Or hasn't he been using them anyhow?"

"Yes, but I don't want to think about anything but Alice now," said Walker happily, holding her arm tightly.

"But I want to think about something else, Hal," she told him quietly. "How was it that Mr. Deering was so confident of your innocence throughout?"

Deering grinned.

"When the box came Hal was frightened, then when you said it was a present all the color came back in his cheeks. But the doctor went a shade redder the instant the box arrived in the hall. And he shouted, 'Get the women away!' while the excelsior still quite completely covered the waxwork inside. I couldn't help knowing that he knew what was in the box, because his apprehensions were so completely justified a moment later."

Alice shuddered and drew closer to Walker. Presently she looked up and said:

"Mr. Deering, we—we're going to announce our marriage. We shouldn't have kept it a secret. And we don't care what happens."

"You'll get a fortune," smiled Deering.

She looked up, startled.

"Why—that's true! But it doesn't matter.

"The main thing is that Hal and I can be free from fear, and have a home together."

Deering shook his head soberly.

"Hal has cheated me," he said resentfully. "The proper conclusion to an affair like this would be for me to be his groom and see him tied up for life. But you've beaten me to it. You're

already tied. I shall always feel as if I've missed something."

Alice, smiling, suddenly pinkened at a thought that came to her.

"We'll call on you yet."

"What for? You're not going to get married all over again?"

Demure, mischievous, and radiantly happy, Alice shook her head.

"That's a mystery you won't solve

until we're ready to tell you. But you'll hear, some day or other."

Puzzled, Deering let it go at that. He forgot it, because it was a year and a half before anything reminded him of it. It was a telegram:

You said I cheated you out of being best man. Come on down and be a god-father. Thomas Deering Walker, nine pounds, a wonder!

HAL.

THE END



The Mystery of the Locked Room

ONE recent night an aged colored woman who occupies a flat in a dingy New York City tenement heard sudden cries of distress from the adjoining flat, followed by what she describes as several dull thuds. She is very old and very deaf. The thuds might have been shots. At any rate, she was alarmed by the noise and went out and summoned a policeman.

The officer followed her back to the tenement. The flat from which the noise had come was occupied by an Isidore Fink, who operated a small laundry business. The officer knocked, received no reply, and finally had to break down the door, which was locked on the inside.

Inside was a gruesome sight. Fink lay in a pool of his own blood, two bullet wounds in his chest and one in his left hand, as though he had tried to grasp the pistol of his assailant.

This is the baffling mystery that faces New York detectives. Who shot Fink? How did the slayer escape? The murder gun was not found, precluding the possibility of suicide. The front door to Fink's tenement had been locked on the inside. A back door was secured by a rusty old lock, and was covered with cobwebs. Iron bars guarded the only window. And a small transom over the front door was too small to admit a man's body. That the murderer had been *inside* the room was proved by the powder marks around the wound in Fink's hand.

Here is a riddle for New York detectives comparable to some of the mysteries in fiction.

Even Money

*Lester Leith Breaks Glass Into
Small Bits—and Police Find
“Diamonds” Everywhere*

By Erle Stanley Gardner

LESTER LEITH surveyed his reflected image in the bedroom mirror. He gazed with the critical inspection of a man who insists upon perfection in clothes. And he found nothing to condemn. The evening clothes fitted his slender form with a degree of perfection that reflected credit upon man and tailor alike.

Nodding his approval, Lester Leith stepped through the door, into the living room of his luxurious bachelor apartment.

His valet stretched his six feet two of well muscled frame, and rustled a newspaper.

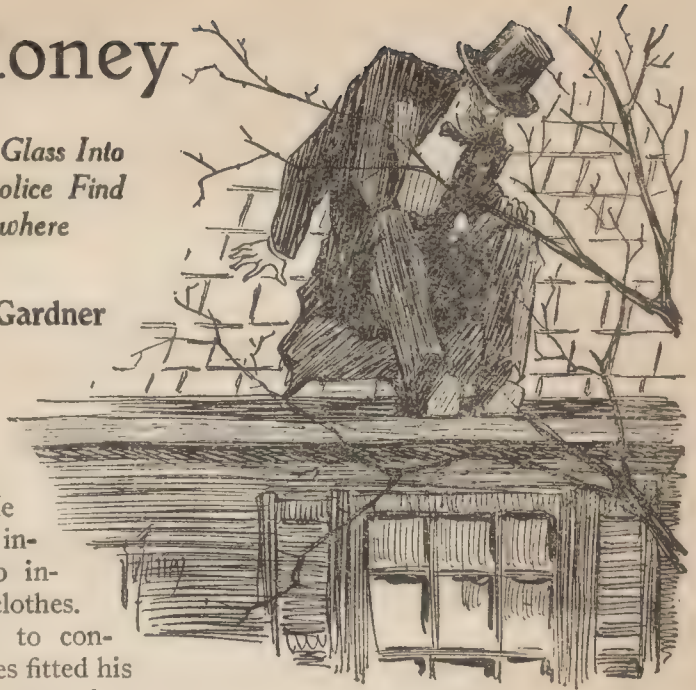
“You’ve seen the evening newspaper, sir?”

Leith frowned slightly.

“Certainly not, Scuttle. You know that I never read the newspapers. I am only interested in crime news, and you save me the crime clippings. Therefore, why should I read the evening newspaper?”

The valet shifted his weight, twisted the sweeping black mustache which concealed part of his mouth, much of his chin.

“There’s a most interesting crime reported, sir, a sort of hi-jacking, sir. I thought you might be interested.”



Lester Leith sank into the depths of a form-fitting easy chair, placed his silken ankles upon a cushioned stool and selected a monogrammed cigarette.

“Really, Scuttle, you intrigue me; but I’m afraid I shall have to quit taking such an interest in crime news.”

“But why, sir; if I may ask, sir?”

“Because, my dear Scuttle, of the intolerance of the police department. Sergeant Ackley has a most limited comprehension, Scuttle. He cannot conceive of a man studying crime for any motive, other than that of pecuniary profit, Scuttle.

“Several times of late he’s intimated that I study crime news for the purpose of detecting some criminal who has made a rich haul. And then he suspects that I seek out such criminal and relieve him of his ill-got gains. His suspicions are becoming annoying, Scuttle. Hardly do I go out but what I find the zealous, but misguided sergeant awaiting my return.

"And it isn't as though the dear man were a gentleman, Scuttle. He's a typical police officer. And he has a most uncontrollable temper, Scuttle. Just because he can't prove his ridiculous accusations, Scuttle, he becomes enraged.

"Now, if the sergeant were a gentleman and a scholar, Scuttle, and a judge of good whisky, it would be a pleasure to have him pay his official visits. In such event, Scuttle, he'd drop in, bring a bottle, have a chat with me, and ask me questions. I'd answer him with pleasure, Scuttle, and we'd have a very pleasant evening.

"But he plows into the room, gets red in the face, raises his voice, orders me searched, subjects me to many indignities, and then leaves in a rage. Do you know, Scuttle, I can't remember a single time when the dear sergeant has even paused to wish me a good night!"

The valet grunted. His own face was slightly flushed.

"Well, sir, you'll have to admit that some one in the city has shown an uncanny ability to dope out crime solutions from the published reports, sir. That man darts in and out like a trout. He beats the police to it, and he collects the boodle.

"And in your own case, sir, Sergeant Ackley tells me that you've deposited over half a million in the last three months!"

Lester Leith paused with a match halfway to his cigarette.

"Scuttle! Do you mean to tell me the sergeant has used his police authority to inspect my bank account?"

The valet nodded.

"So he says, sir. Of course, sir, you'll have to admit that you take a most active interest in crime news, that you invariably go out, after I've told you about some particularly striking crime where there's been a good haul; and that you always come back dough heavy.



Men foregathered,
rimming the circle
of light. "All right, let's dig,"
Sergeant Ackley said

"Your account shows a half million in a short time. So I'm advised, sir."

Lester Leith conveyed the lighted match to his cigarette, inhaled deeply, and blew out the flame with smoky breath.

"Dear, dear, Scuttle. One has no privacy these days. Did the sergeant also investigate my expenditures?"

The valet was breathing heavily. His dark features twisted with excitement. The lowering eyes surveyed Lester Leith from beneath bushy brows.

"Yes, sir. He found that out, too, sir. It seems you've created a trust fund for widows who are in needy circumstances. That came as quite a shock to Sergeant Ackley. Beyond your own living expenses the whole income goes to the fund, sir."

Lester Leith exhaled twin streams of blue smoke, shook his head sadly.

"How nebulous a thing our personal liberties are, Scuttle. I'm sorry the police have found that out, Scuttle. I had fancied a man might enjoy a little privacy in his financial affairs. But you must admit, Scuttle, that the fund is well employed. Widows, my dear Scuttle, are creatures of circumstance. If I had my way, Scuttle, life insurance would be compulsory. A man marries, has children, unfits his wife for any industrial work, and then dies. The children suffer, Scuttle.

"But we digress, Scuttle. I find that we are discussing my most private affairs. Tell me, Scuttle, how did Sergeant Ackley happen to confide in you?"

The valet jumped, flushed guiltily, let his eyes waver for a moment.

"He was shaking me down, sir, trying to get me to spy upon you, sir."

Lester Leith shook his head.

"Of course, you told him nothing, Scuttle."

"Of course not, sir."

Lester Leith smiled, an enigmatical smile.

"How fortunate," he drawled.

"But come, come, Scuttle, all of this is digression, and digression is but mental procrastination. Tell me, Scuttle, what was the crime you had reference to? Something in the evening paper, Scuttle? A bit of hi-jacking, you said? I wonder if the dear sergeant will seek to blame this crime on me as well?"

II

THE valet sighed, reverted to the paper.

"No, sir. They know the man that did this, but it's most unusual, sir. The Wilomena docked this morning, sir. It seems there was a man named Masterson aboard, sir. He had been an airplane mechanic in Africa, sir, at the new diamond fields, sir. You know the place, where they bring the diamonds out by airplane, sir.

"And there was a man named Gundleson, a real estate operator from San Francisco, returning from Capetown, sir. And it seems Masterson had some pearls that he wanted to smuggle in. But he was afraid the customs would find them. He confided his troubles to Gundleson. Gundleson hatched out a scheme. There were a pair of crutches in the purser's office, kept there for emergency. Gundleson was formerly a carpenter, sir, and he suggested that they take the top pieces off the crutches, hollow out the interior and replace the tops. Then when Masterson was getting off the gang plank, just as he was entering the customs office, he was to fall and pretend to sprain his ankle. Gundleson would run to the purser's office, bring out the crutches, and Mas-

tersen would hobble through the customs, with no one the wiser.

"It was a clever scheme, and it worked. The Wilomena is rather a small boat, sir. Gundleson broke open the carpenter's tool chest, got what he required, slipped into the purser's office and did the job.

"Masterson dropped in the pearls, went to the customs office, fell, yelled that he'd sprained his ankle. Gundleson brought the crutches and Masterson hobbled through the customs, taking the pearls with him. He claims they were rather small, but easily worth five thousand dollars.

"When he got to his hotel and took the tops off the crutches he found that they were filled with bits of broken glass. There was not so much as the sign of a pearl. He notified the police. They caught Gundleson as he was leaving the city.

"Gundleson refuses to talk, sir. He said he would plead guilty to defrauding the customs, but that he hadn't seen a thing of the pearls. After he said that, he kept absolutely quiet. He won't say a word, sir. He doesn't ask for an attorney; but merely keeps absolutely dumb."

Scuttle gazed intently at Lester Leith, as though he would read his master's facial expression and so deduce his thoughts. But Lester Leith's face was as blank as that of a Chinese poker player.

"Interesting, Scuttle, very interesting. The police feel Gundleson's guilty?"

"Yes, sir. So it would seem, sir. And I have a little inside information, sir—that is, sir, there's a friend of mine, a lady friend, sir, who is very friendly with a policeman, sir, and he told her so, sir. She told me."

Lester Leith twisted the corners of

his finely shaped mouth in the ghost of a smile, but nodded gravely.

"I see, Scuttle. I see."

Silence descended upon the apartment, a hot silence, broken only by the rumble of distant thunder, the heavy breathing of the valet.

"Do you know what I was wondering, sir?"

"No, Scuttle. What were you wondering?"

"I was wondering if this mysterious hi-jacker that's been reading the newspaper accounts of crime might not figure out where Gundleson had left those pearls, sir?"

"Diamonds, Scuttle. Not pearls."

"Diamonds, sir? Diamonds! Why, the newspaper says pearls."

Lester Leith nodded, absently. It was as though his mind was occupied with some fascinating problem which took his mental energy, leaving him to carry on the conversation mechanically.

"Quite so, Scuttle. Masterson told the police they were pearls because he wanted to get Gundleson captured. He didn't dare tell him they were really, stolen diamonds, unset, uncut."

"How do you figure that, sir?"

"Quite obvious, my dear Scuttle. The man, Masterson, was returning from the diamond country. He had been an airplane mechanic. He had managed to pilfer some quantity of uncut diamonds, and he was smuggling them in because he didn't dare to declare them.

"But he became suspicious there might be a detective shadowing him. There probably was. So he enlisted the aid of Gundleson, an acquaintance he'd picked up on the boat. They hatched out the scheme, and the scheme worked. But it worked too well.

"If they'd been pearls, the man who robbed Masterson wouldn't have sub-

stituted chips of glass. That tells the story right there. Couple that with the fact that Masterson was returning from the diamond fields—tut, tut, Scuttle. I'm surprised you should have believed the pearl story for a minute. That was merely a yarn Masterson made up to enlist the aid of the police in getting Gundleson back, and it was a very crude yarn at that. I suspect this Masterson must be a bungler, rather a poor craftsman as a crook, Scuttle."

The valet gulped.

"Yes, sir. I guess you're right, sir. That would seem to be the way of it, sir. Should you tell Sergeant Ackley of your deductions, sir?"

"Certainly not, Scuttle. Sergeant Ackley would immediately suspect that I was interested in the case. The dear sergeant is very zealous and conscientious, Scuttle. But he's rather blundering, and prone to suspicion, Scuttle."

"Scuttle, this case interests me."

"Yes, sir?"

"Yes, indeed, Scuttle. Very much. I wonder if you could get me a colander from the kitchenette."

"A colander, sir?"

"Yes, Scuttle, a colander. You know what I mean, one of those round dishes with perforations in the bottom. I believe they're used for draining vegetables."

"Yes, sir, but what on earth do you want of a colander, may I ask?"

"Yes, Scuttle."

"Yes, what, sir?"

"Yes, you may ask, Scuttle. Ask as much as you wish, Scuttle—and, by the way, Scuttle, we have a can of baking powder?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought as much, Scuttle. Dump it in the sink, and bring me the can, Scuttle. The baking powder can and

the colander. Do you wish to ask what I want with the baking powder can, Scuttle?"

The valet grew crimson at the taunting tone.

"Well, what do you want with it?"

Lester Leith resumed his drawling tone.

"Ah, yes, Scuttle. You've asked what I want of it. That relieves your mind, Scuttle. I knew you would wish to ask. And, now you have asked, Scuttle, there's nothing to hinder you from immediately getting the articles I asked for, Scuttle. A suppressed desire is dangerous, Scuttle. If you had fetched me the articles without asking why I wished them, that would have been bad for you, Scuttle. The desire to ask the question would have been suppressed, and the subconscious always takes notes of repressions and suppressions. Those are the little things that govern the building of character, Scuttle."

"But now you have obeyed your impulse. You have asked, Scuttle. And now, as I pointed out, there is nothing further to prevent you from carrying out my requests."

The valet snorted. For a moment it seemed he was about to throw himself upon Lester Leith. The huge hands clenched and unclenched. The cords of the neck strained and stood out. The veins of the forehead swelled and became purple. The face grew crimson.

But Lester Leith apparently did not notice.

He blew a smoke ring, traced its perimeter with the tip of a well manicured forefinger, and chuckled throatily. It was as though he enjoyed some rare joke which could not be perceived by other mortals.

And the valet, regaining control of himself by a visible effort, turned to

the kitchenette and made a great rattle of pots and kettles.

III

AFTER awhile he returned with a colander and a baking powder can. Lester Leith took them with almost judicial gravity.

"Thank you, Scuttle. And now we have a hammer, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think I'll trouble you to get it for me, Scuttle. A hammer always comes in handy. In fact, one should never be without a hammer. And, by the way, Scuttle, the glass paper weight, the one with the picture in the bottom— Yes, indeed, Scuttle, that's the one. Thank you, Scuttle.

"And my hat, coat and stick, Scuttle. And my gloves. By all means don't forget my gloves, Scuttle."

The great form of the valet oozed about the apartment in ponderous haste. Despite his bulk, there was something furtive in the motions of the man.

Lester Leith watched him with amused eyes.

"Do you know, Scuttle, I fancy I named you too soon."

The valet paused. "Yes, sir?"

"Yes, indeed, Scuttle. But don't hesitate, Scuttle. Just keep right on with your tasks, Scuttle. I merely talked to pass the time. Can't you listen and work at the same time, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do so, then. Do so, by all means. I was only about to remind you, Scuttle, that when you applied for work with me, Scuttle, I didn't even glance at your references. I didn't ask you your name.

"You'll remember, Scuttle, that I merely looked at you, and told you you

were hired. I believe I mentioned at the time that I would call you Scuttle because you reminded me of a reincarnated pirate. I never allowed you to tell me your true name.

"But, do you know, Scuttle, of late you impress me more as having been a police detective in a former incarnation. After all, there is nothing to indicate that you might not have been both. The theory of reincarnation is most fascinating, Scuttle. It gives us such a reasonable and logical interpretation of life. Have you studied it, perhaps, Scuttle?"

The man straightened, turned.

"No, and what's more I don't want to."

"Tut, tut, Scuttle. Now you *do* remind me of a police detective. They, too, are prone to revel in ignorance. The criterion of true education, Scuttle, is a passionate interest in all forms of knowledge.

"But I see we are digressing, Scuttle. You have my hat, coat and gloves. Get my cane, Scuttle, and I'll be gone. You may have the evening off, Scuttle. Do whatever you wish. But it might be a good plan for you to study something of the theory of successive lives. There is quite a bit to it, Scuttle."

The valet remained rigidly inactive.

"You're going out to hi-jack those diamonds!" he accused.

Lester Leith reached for another cigarette.

"Scuttle, you're getting as bad as Sergeant Ackley. I really believe you're becoming convinced that I am the mysterious hi-jacker, Scuttle. You shouldn't hold such thoughts over me, Scuttle. If there's anything in hypnotism you and Sergeant Ackley, between you, might actually start me on a criminal career.

"The thought intrigues me, Scuttle.

Really, it might be worth the while of a man, Scuttle. Because you see, Scuttle, this mysterious hi-jacker of Sergeant Ackley's doesn't rob honest men. He merely robs crooks. And, in that, he's really doing nothing more than does society. Society levies a fine, Scuttle. By that fine the criminal is forced to pay over money, Scuttle. That acts as a crime deterrent.

"But do you suppose the criminal cares who gets the fine, or what is ultimately done with it? Wouldn't a fine be just as effective if it was to be levied by a private individual as by a court of law? And wouldn't it act as a crime deterrent if the money went to—oh, let us say to provide a fund for indigent widows?"

"You really mustn't put such ideas in my head, Scuttle. They offer too interesting possibilities. They fascinate me, Scuttle. But come, come, we digress— Ah, yes, Scuttle. My hat, my coat. Thank you, Scuttle. And now good night, Scuttle.

"By the way, Scuttle, if Sergeant Ackley should call while I'm away—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Tell him I'm out, Scuttle. But I don't think I'd mention that I was interested in the accounts of the diamond hi-jacking, Scuttle. The dear sergeant's so imaginative, and so suspicious, Scuttle. He might go jumping at conclusions again. And when Sergeant Ackley jumps at conclusions, Scuttle, he becomes quite irksome. And so, once more, Scuttle, good night!"

The door slammed. The valet stood, feet planted wide apart, his nostrils distended, the breath coming laboriously as though he had been running.

"Damn him!" he gritted.

There was the sound of a latch clicking. A closet door swung noiselessly inward, and a big-framed, raw-boned

individual stepped into the room on cat-like feet.

The valet turned swiftly, saw the man, jerked a thumb at the door.

"You heard him, sergeant. I was glad you did. Some day I'm going to kill him. I believe I'd have throttled him if he'd called me Scuttle just once more. He Scuttles me this, and Scuttles me that until I get so mad I can't even think!"

"I hate his damn drawl, I hate his smoke rings. I hate his attitude of superiority, and I hate his hints about my being a police detective. You heard him to-night for yourself. Don't you think he knows who I am, and what I'm here for?"

The sergeant crossed to the deep chair which had been so lately vacated by the owner, and settled his huge frame.

"Oh, well, Beaver, what if he does? After all, a detective has to do disagreeable things. We're drawing the net about this dude. To-night we catch him cold. There's a man waiting downstairs to shadow him. We've got another tailing Masterson. He can't get by with anything to-night, Beaver."

The undercover man folded himself upon a stool, pulled one of Lester Leith's monogrammed cigarettes from a polished wooden case and scraped a noisy match across the broad sole of his foot.

"Well, we've thought we had him cornered before, but he's always managed to slip through our fingers somehow. You've got to hand it to him for having brains, damn him! Look at how quick he doped out the stuff about the diamonds."

Sergeant Ackley scraped his chin with a spadelike thumb nail. The wire stiff ends of the stubble gave forth a rasping noise.

"Yeah, I know. But that ain't so much. The department doped out the same thing. We just didn't give it to the newspapers, that's all."

"What did he want with the colander and the baking powder can?"

Beaver flushed.

"Why ask me? You heard me ask him, and you heard what he said. I almost pasted him one on his smug kisser when he pulled that wise crack. 'What do you want with 'em, may I ask?' I says. And he comes back with one of his wise cracks. 'Yes, Scuttle, you may ask!'"

"Why, damn him, when we get the goods on him I'll beat him within an inch of his life. I'd do it now, only he's too powerful. He's got social position, and money, and pull. But he's nothing but a crook underneath. Do you know I believe he got all of his money hi-jacking crooks!"

Sergeant Ackley shook his head.

"No, he didn't get his money that way. He's got better'n a million of his own. It's only recently that he's been doing hi-jacking. But you shouldn't have told him about the bank account, Scut—"

The man jumped to his feet.

"No, you don't, sergeant! I don't care if I get canned off the force for disrespect! You can't call me Scuttle! I won't let no living man rub it in—"

The sergeant waved a broad hand.

"Sorry, Beaver. I'd been listening in there so long, and he called you Scuttle so often, I must have picked up the habit. But don't feel so sore about it. I've had 'em call me worse things than that."

Beaver snorted.

"Well, you'd ought to have a steady diet of it. Scuttle this, and Scuttle that, and Scuttle the other. And it's the way he says it, the sneering, super-

cilious, nasty drawling way he has—"

Sergeant Ackley held up a broad hand.

"That'll do, Beaver. You're interrupting my train of thought. I've been detailed for awhile to devote my entire attention to this mysterious hi-jacker; and I can't afford to fail. You'll have to keep your temper and remember your place."

"Now what do you suppose he's going to do with that hammer?"

IV

THERE was a knock on the door.

Beaver opened it a crack, then flung it open. A plain-clothes man stood framed in the doorway.

"Johnson sent me up to report. He's lost him."

"Lost him!"

"Yes, sergeant. You see, Leith went into his garage. There was a sound of pounding and of something breaking. It sounded as though Leith was pounding up his windshield. Then there was the noise of something being sifted through a tin strainer."

"Johnson wanted to get close to the door and see what it was all about. He'd just reached the driveway when there was the roar of a motor and Leith's red roadster came shooting out."

"Johnson barely had time to fling himself out of the way. Leith shot by him, going in reverse at fully twenty miles an hour. And he backed clean to the corner, with his headlights full on the police car we'd parked at the curb half a block away. There wasn't a chance. He spun the wheel, snapped the gears and tore away like a bat outa hell."

Sergeant Ackley heaved to his feet, spat explosively.

"How in hell can I catch crooks when they give me a bunch of flat-

heads like that to work with? I specifically told Johnson not to let anything keep him from shadowing Leith's car. Now we've got to start on a blind lead.

"Beaver, get me headquarters on the line."

Beaver's stubby fingers worked the dials on the telephone. Sergeant Ackley barked orders.

"Turn Gundleson out of jail and have three men shadow him in relays. Double the tail on Masterson. There's a guy in evening clothes going to pick one of 'em up. When that happens telephone me at the number I left with the operator. Give the message to Beaver. Don't fail now. G'-by."

The sergeant slammed back the receiver, glowered about him.

"A fine bunch! A hell of a fine bunch you are! Craig, go tell Johnson to report here at once. But first find out what that hammering in the garage was.

"Beaver, ring up the steamship company, get the names and addresses of the carpenter and the purser on the Wilomena. I think I'll have those boys in and shake 'em down. It may be they know something. Have headquarters send out a car of extra men, ready to plug anything that may develop.

"Get started, you fellows, we've got to work quick."

The men exploded into activity. Sergeant Ackley paced the floor, up and down, up and down. Craig had dashed for the corridor. Beaver had dialed the telephone.

At length Beaver covered the mouthpiece with his palm and turned a corrugated forehead to his chief.

"Say, sergeant, this is a funny break. The steamship company says the police rang up for that information about the carpenter and the purser fif-

teen minutes ago. They gave the names and addresses."

Sergeant Ackley snorted.

"I wish headquarters would lay off a case after I start working on it. Tell 'em to give us the addresses again."

Beaver nodded, relayed the message, scribbled names and addresses on a pad of paper, handed it to Sergeant Ackley, hung up the telephone.

The sergeant regarded the scribbled names and grunted.

Beaver suddenly gasped.

"Say, sergeant, do you suppose there's any chance that Leith did the telephoning on this?"

Sergeant Ackley regarded his subordinate with narrowed eyes.

"How d'yuh mean, Beaver?"

"S'pose Lester Leith had an idea the carpenter and the purser might know something more than them other guys had told the police. Suppose he was the one that rang up the steamship company. He could have told 'em he was talking for police headquarters and got the information he wanted."

Sergeant Ackley scraped the angle of his jaw again.

"It's worth a try. Ring up headquarters and find out if they've done any telephoning to the steamship company."

Again Beaver fitted his thick finger end to the dialing arrangement and called headquarters.

"They'll call back after they've looked up the calls, sergeant," he said.

The door opened.

This time two men stood on the threshold.

"Come in, Johnson. You bungled the job of shadowing."

"Yes, chief. But I wanted to see what he was pounding. He was hammering up a piece of glass, a paper weight. The pieces he hammered up

he sifted through a colander. The hammer, the colander and the small pieces of glass are still down there. He took the big pieces with him."

Sergeant Ackley reached the door in two strides.

"We'll take a look!" he snapped.

The look showed them a tin colander, fine bits of glass, a hammer.

"He's taken that paper weight and smashed it up into pieces, and he's taken the big pieces," opined Beaver.

Sergeant Ackley grunted and ran his thumb nail rapidly along the angle of his jaw. "We'll go start something," he promised, and led the way back to the apartment.

The telephone was ringing when they arrived. Headquarters had checked up on the calls. They had not been in communication with the steamship company.

Sergeant Ackley turned to Johnson.

"He's out shaking down the ship's carpenter and the purser for additional information. Go down to these addresses an' you can pick 'm up. You go to one, send Craig to the other. Get started."

Johnson regarded his superior with wide eyes.

"How'd yuh find that out, sergeant?"

"I figured it out from the data I had. Lester Leith ain't the only one that can sit in a chair, get reports on what's doin' and figure things out. I figured he'd be likely to call the steamship company, and I caught him at it. It's a good thing I did, too. A fellow'd never catch any crooks with the bunch of squareheads they give him as detectives!"

Beaver cleared his throat.

"I—er—I helped on that steamship company, sergeant."

"Like hell you did! I figured the

whole thing out myself. Get started, you guys!"

Beaver groaned. As the door closed, Sergeant Ackley turned to him.

"Of course, you did a little on that steamship company business, Beaver; but it was *my* idea."

Beaver nodded wordlessly.

V

LESTER LEITH paused before a house in one of the cheaper districts. It was a small cozy place. The yard was well tended, flowers bloomed in profusion. About it was an air of neatness.

Lester Leith walked determinedly up the cement walk, rapped on the front door.

A moment of silence, then the scraping of a chair, the sound of feet. A broad-shouldered individual, coatless, shirtless, opened the door. His undershirt was open at the throat, showed a hairy chest, great forearms.

Behind him stood a woman, one of the neat, puttery type of women who go through life in alert silence.

"You're Fender, ship's carpenter on the Wilomena?"

The man nodded.

"I was calling to ask you about Mr. Masterson. And I noticed something glittering on your front walk. I picked it up. Does it belong to you?"

Fender regarded the man before him suspiciously, then dropped his glittering, close set eyes to the outstretched palm.

"Looks like a piece o' glass," he remarked, and there was cold suspicion in his tone.

"It does," remarked Lester Leith, "very much like a piece of glass indeed. But it also looks like an uncut diamond. Did you ever see diamonds in the rough?"

The man gulped.

"Diamond! Say, what t' thunder? Diamond! On my front walk! How'd it get there?"

Lester Leith shrugged his shoulder.

"We can soon tell," he said.

There was a bit of glass paneling in the front door, a diamond-shaped pane that broke the stern lines of the heavy wood. Lester Leith pinched the bit of glittering substance between thumb and forefinger and turned to the diamond-shaped pane of glass.

As he turned, he slipped the diamond ring on his third finger to his thumb. The transition was made while his back was turned, and could not be seen by his audience.

Quickly he raised his hand, drew it sharply down.

There was the sound of gritting substance biting deeply into gritting substance. A deep scar appeared upon the glass pane.

"It seems to cut glass," remarked Lester Leith. "Tell you what, Fender, I've got a friend in the customs office. I'll go down and ask him if it's a diamond. He'd ought to know. They have occasion to pass upon lots of them in the course of a year."

The burly man extended one eager clutching hand for the bright crystal.

"Sally, get my coat! Gosh, a diamond! I'm goin' up to the customs, Sally. Gee, gosh, a diamond!"

Lester Leith relinquished the hard object, fished in his pocket.

"On second thought, I don't think I'd better accompany you. You go alone. They'll tell you. Perhaps there's a jewelry store open somewhere nearer. At any rate, it's yours. You keep it.

"If it's a diamond so much the better. If it should turn out not to be a diamond here's a little something to

compensate you for the scratched window pane. Good night."

And Lester Leith made his way down the walk with rapid stride, turned the corner and vanished from view.

Behind him an open-mouthed individual stared at the yellow-backed bill that had been left in his hands. It was big enough to pay his grocery bill for a year.

Lester Leith climbed in his red roadster, pressed the throttle well down toward the floor boards. Precious time had been wasted. He must work fast now.

The car slowed to a stop against a section of dark curbing. The neighborhood here wasn't quite as cheery. The houses were more unkempt. There was an aura of squalid discontent which steeped the section.

Leith consulted a penciled memorandum and hurried around a corner, paused to survey numbers and approached a house midway in the fourth block.

An insistent forefinger at the front bell brought a slender figure to the lighted hallway. He surveyed the silhouetted outline of the figure on his doorstep for a full five seconds before he approached the door and opened it a crack.

His breath reeked of alcohol. The cunning eyes were as alert as those of a loon. The bullet head twisted and turned upon a thin, birdlike neck.

Through the crack in the door came the steamy odors of boiled cooking. A woman's voice whined a sharp admonition to eager-eyed children who peered into the hall. There was the sound of a slamming door.

"Well?" the voice was rasping.

"You're Barkley, purser on the Wilomena. I was calling to find out if you knew anything more about the

Masterson case than has appeared in the papers."

"No, I don't know a thing. What's more, I don't have long ashore, and—"

A glittering object upon an outstretched palm interrupted him.

"I found this in the cement curbing of the walk as I came up."

The thin man jumped back as though he had been struck.

"Well?" he rasped at length. "Piece o' glass, eh?"

"Perhaps," gravely asserted Lester Leith. "Perhaps not. Do you know, it looks surprisingly like a diamond to me, an uncut diamond. Perhaps the children had been playing with it, and—"

"Diamond!" rasped the voice. "Guess not. You're crazy. What're you tryin' to get at, anyway? An' I don't believe that's a diamond—"

The rasping voice trailed off. An uneasy glance went over the shoulder.

Lester Leith turned. This door had a broad pane of glass, square, dirty. He raised his hand, jerked down. Once more there sounded the gritting noise of hard substance biting into hard substance. For the second time that evening the path of his hand was marked by a deep cut in the surface of the glass.

"By George!" exclaimed Lester Leith, "I'll bet it is a diamond! If it is, it's yours, Barkley. I found it on your property, you know. Tell you what, I've got a friend at the customs office. He can tell if it's genuine diamond or whether it isn't. They pass on hundreds of them in a year. What do you say we drive down there? I've got a car around the corner."

The little man recoiled.

"Customs!" he exclaimed.

Lester Leith smiled his most disarming smile.

"Certainly. The customs are open, and it's a very fine place to ascertain what sort of a stone this is. I happen to know, because my friend was in his office just an hour ago. He was checking over some records. I was talking with him about this Masterson affair, you know."

Barkley shifted uneasily.

"Tell you what," he piped in his rasping voice. "You go down there alone. See what he says. He might be suspicious if he saw me along, might think I'd smuggled it in or somethin'. You run along down there, an' I'll get shaved, an' then, if it is a diamond, you can bring it back here."

Lester Leith bowed gravely.

"Just as you wish," he said, turned and walked rapidly away.

The door banged. There were hurried steps in the hallway.

Lester Leith abruptly turned, as though he had forgotten something, and walked swiftly to the front steps, seemed to change his mind, took the walk that went toward the side of the house, caught the spindly limbs of a half dead tree, swung his weight from the ground, grasped a gutter, and squatted upon the roof of a house.

"Curious children, hostile wife, dread of customs and police," he muttered. "Odds on, he picks the back yard. It's better than even money."

And Lester Leith's judgment was correct.

Not more than half a minute elapsed when a slinking shadow came furtively from the house, edged silently into the yard, went to the soft soil at the base of the very tree Lester Leith had ascended, and bent double.

There was the sound of earth being thrown to one side. A pebble rattled on a glass container. Then the stooped figure made hurried motions, straight-

ened, patted the ground with his feet and slunk as silently into the house.

VI

LESTER LEITH slipped down the roof, swung from the gutter, dropped to the ground, and sank exploring fingers into the soft ground. He felt the edge of a cream bottle. His gloved fingers pulled away the earth, brought the bottle out. Within that bottle certain hard objects rattled crisply.

Those hard objects were transferred speedily to Leith's coat. From another pocket he abstracted other hard objects which went back into the cream jar. Then he buried the jar.

"Now to get back—" he breathed, and abruptly straightened, his breath coming out as sharply as the hiss of a swinging sword.

A long, dark car had swished around the corner, pulled unerringly to the curb. Men leaped from the car to the ground. In their hands were sawed off shotguns. Two men took each side of the house. Two men went toward the front door.

Lester Leith gave one jump, caught a branch, swung upward, and regained the roof of the house.

From the dwelling below came sounds of sudden activity. There was the pounding of an imperative summons, the shrill scream of a woman, the sound of a child crying. A rasping voice grated forth a protest.

"I'm tellin' yuh, I was framed. This here guy came to the door with a diamond. He said he was goin' to the customs. I knew he was a crook."

"We was just checking up," boomed a voice that rang with authority. "We ain't got anything against you, but you sure act guilty. Now spill us the works. Come clean."

There followed the sound of a voice rasping with all of the harsh monotony of a saw going through a knotty board. Lester Leith listened. From time to time he caught a word or two.

At length the rasping voice died away. There was a rapid fire of question and answer, an almost hysterical barrage of denial. Then the house echoed to steps.

After some fifteen minutes a back door banged open, and the voices drifted to Lester Leith's ears undiminished.

"Well, there ain't a thing in the house. Wait'll Sergeant Ackley gets here. This thing's too deep for me. You say this guy came to the door with a diamond and scratched it across the glass. You hadn't seen 'm before?"

"Well, I've telephoned for the sergeant. He'll show up any minute. Here he is now."

There was the wailing of a siren, the staccato bark of an open exhaust. Tires screeched as a low red car hurtled around the corner, skidded to the curb.

"All right," snapped Sergeant Ackley. "I see you got a live lead on the tip I handed you, Johnson. You'll find out that I can do a little deductive work myself when I'm given the chance. Now what's it all about?"

Johnson moved closer, rumbled in a low, confidential voice for a full three minutes.

Sergeant Ackley grunted, and that grunt was as filled with triumphant satisfaction as the grunt of a pig approaching a full trough.

"Say you've searched the house, eh? And Leith went for the customs, eh? Humph. We'll just search the yard. See if we can find 'em, then set a trap for Leith. Get the men to move the car around the block. We won't want him

to see the car here when he comes back. This guy, Barkley, is lyin' of course. Slip the bracelets on him. He's the guy that did the job."

A period of hurrying activity from below was broken by the click of steel, the purring of powerful motors, the glitter of a searchlight as it swept the ground, a powerful hand light that sent an illuminating circle of brilliant light.

At length there came a low hail.

"There's been some ground scattered about here at the base of this tree, sergeant."

Men foregathered, rimming the circle of light.

"Bring Barkley over here."

More men gathered.

"All right. Let's dig."

Eager hands thrust away the soil.

"Here it is; a cream jar."

"All right. Let's finger-print it first. Be careful."

"Yes, sir. And it's loaded with diamonds, sergeant! Look at 'em."

Barkley's rasping voice raised a protest.

"I don't know nothing about 'em, I'm sure. I tell you they were planted here. You admit this guy in the dude duds is a crook. Why blame me? Can't you see he planted 'em—"

A prod in the ribs broke off the conversation.

"Shut up until you're spoken to. Finger-print that cream bottle, then tumble out the sparklers. Good. What's that? Finger-prints? Lots of 'em, eh? Yeah. Now take Barkley's prints. Let's look 'em over. All prints from one man, eh? All right. That's just what I expected. Barkley, get your hands over here. Here, get nearer the light.

"Yeah, they're Barkley's finger-prints all right. Hot chance you got of denying you been handlin' that

bottle. Better count them diamonds, boys. Sure they look like glass. That's the way all diamonds look. Well, try 'em out. Cut a line in the milk bottle. They'll cut glass like it was hot butter. *What!* The hell they don't! Here, let me see!"

There followed a period of scrambling motion, hoarse curses. At length Sergeant Ackley turned to the purser.

"I ain't got the straights of it yet, but somebody just saved you a good big term in the stir. Somebody beat you to it before you got at those crutches. You emptied 'em all right and stuck in some glass chips. But somebody'd been there first, and all you got was glass."

Barkley's voice rasped its shrill protest.

"Are them things glass, honest? Why the dirty damn crook! It must have been Gundleson, after all, then. I thought I'd beat him to it. Why, I'd have taken my oath they were—"

The rasping voice abruptly died.

"Yes, go on."

Barkley shook his head. His wits had suddenly functioned. Not another word could they get out of him.

Sergeant Ackley spat his disgust.

"Well, we'll take him along, anyway. We can't make no charge, but maybe he can help us hook Gundleson. There ain't nothing we can do with a bird for hooking half a cent's worth of busted glass."

Johnson's voice was worried.

"How about Leith? He'll likely come back. Couldn't we bait a trap for him?"

"Even if we did we couldn't catch him for lifting a penny's worth of glass. Say, wasn't it a paper weight he busted up? Well, look at this glass! There's a coupla pieces that are rounded on one side just like the top of a paper weight!"

There was silence from below for a space of perhaps two seconds, and then every one started to talk at once. Nor did the conversation die out until the group had split itself into individual units, each sprinting for the police cars at top speed.

Lester Leith was philosophical about it.

"Fortunes of war," he muttered as he stretched his length upon the cold shingles. "I'll have to wait here until things quiet down."

VII

AND wait he did, sitting in faultless evening clothes, perched upon the roof, not daring even to smoke. It was fully an hour later that he swung down from the roof, hit the ground and strolled to the sidewalk.

It was a four block walk to his car. He made it rapidly. A swift look about and he was in and gone. The car roared into the boulevard, threaded its way through traffic. At a branch post office it came to the curb. Lester Leith entered the building, walked boldly to a battered desk.

From the pocket of his coat he took more than five dozen hard objects, objects that looked like glass, yet were not glass. He tied these in a handkerchief, wrapped them up well, thrust them in an empty tobacco can, wrapped the can in paper, addressed it to himself, secured stamps from a pocket-book and dropped the package through a slot, knowing that the government would attend to its delivery.

Then he drove to his apartment.

As he ran the car in the garage, an ominous figure stepped to either side of the running-board.

"What's this, a holdup?"

"Come with us. You're under arrest."

"Again?"

There was no reply to the taunting remark. Lester Leith finished parking his car, switched off the ignition and lights.

The men closed in, each took an elbow. They escorted him to the elevator, to his apartment.

Sergeant Ackley was waiting within.

"Craig's searching the car?"

"Yes, sergeant."

"Have you searched him?"

"No, sir. We held him so he couldn't ditch anything an' brought 'm up here."

Lester Leith reached for a cigarette.

"Scuttle, we have our usual visitors again. Would you mind putting on a little coffee. The dear sergeant looks a trifle upset.

"Sergeant, do have one of those cigarettes. You'll find they're excellent. Sorry if I kept you waiting. What is it this time?"

The sergeant made no reply. He merely flipped his hand. At the signal, trained hands started making a careful search of Lester Leith's clothes.

They discovered one baking powder can, empty.

Sergeant Ackley levelled an accusing forefinger.

"Now I'm going to warn you, Leith, that anything you say can be used against you at the trial. We've got a case against you now. We can prove that you smashed up a paper weight, that you sifted the glass and took out the bigger pieces, that you went out with those pieces of glass.

"We can prove that you called at Fender's house and showed him a piece of glass, telling him you found it on the sidewalk. We can prove that you called at Barkley's house and did the same thing.

"Then we can prove that Barkley buried a cream jar, and, in that cream

jar were the bits of glass that you had smashed from the paper weight. There's a peculiar sort of glass used for those paper weights, and it can be chemically identified.

"Now what have you to say?"

Lester Leith took a step forward.

"Pardon me. It's all right for me to be seated in my own apartment? Thank you, sergeant. Now what was the question? Oh, yes, what did I have to say?"

"Well, sergeant, I'm sure I don't know. You say you can prove those things. I take it you're intending to prosecute Barkley for stealing the glass chips from me. I wouldn't do it, sergeant. I wouldn't do it if I were you. Barkley's got a wife and children. And then again, a jury might not convict. It seems to me there's some doctrine somewhere about the law's not taking notice of trifles. Even if you could prove all you say, the value of the glass is such that—"

Ackley interrupted.

"Well, you know damned well it ain't Barkley I'm figuring on arresting. It's you!"

"Me?"

"Yes, you. How can you explain where you've been and what you've been doing to-night. What would you tell a jury?"

Lester Leith smiled, lit a cigarette.

"Oh, *that!*" he drawled. "Well, sergeant, I don't think I'd tell it to a jury. It might make me look ridiculous. But I'll tell it to you, sergeant. It will be in confidence, of course. In fact I rather anticipated confiding in you.

"You see, sergeant, I became very much interested in that crutch robbery of Masterson's. Scuttle, my valet, can tell you I was exceedingly interested in it."

Sergeant Ackley's eyes were glitter-

ing with emotion. He flashed a meaning glance to his henchmen, warning them not to miss a word of this admission. At last Lester Leith was talking himself into their power.

"Well, go on."

"Well," drawled Lester Leith, "without casting any aspersions upon the intelligence of the police department, I deduced that it was fairly obvious the theft had been of diamonds rather than pearls. The place of concealment was made too large for pearls. It wasn't clear how Masterson could have secured any pearls, and it was clear that he might have secured uncut diamonds.

"He wouldn't have been apt to smuggle pearls, and he would have been forced to smuggle diamonds, since the mere possession of diamonds would have cast suspicion upon him, resulted in his detention.

"Well, sergeant, the truth of the matter is that I get quite a kick out of being an amateur sleuth. Of course, sergeant, it probably all seems childish to you. You're a professional. I'm just an amateur.

"But, sergeant, it occurred to me that Gundleson had given his right name, his correct address to Masterson. He wouldn't have done that if he had planned to hi-jack the diamonds. His statement when he was first arrested that he would plead guilty to conspiracy to defraud the customs—and a hundred other things made me think some person had found out about those crutches, some one other than the two who hatched the scheme.

"Naturally it would either be the carpenter, who might have missed his tools, or the purser, who might have found sawdust on the floor, noticed that the crutches had been moved.

"At any rate, I determined to try

and find out. I thought that I might lay a trap for each of the men. I tried it with Fender, came to the conclusion he was innocent. Then I tried the same test with Barkley, and came to the conclusion that he, too, was innocent.

"But I'd got them both worked up, thinking there were diamonds about, and I had all that broken glass I hadn't any use for.

"Well, sergeant, to make a long story short, I dumped that glass into the cream jar that was sitting on Barkley's front porch. And, do you know, sergeant, so strong is my desire to dabble in criminal psychology, that I told myself at the time it would be an even money bet Barkley would hide the glass and say nothing about it.

"But I see I'd have lost my bet. He evidently notified the police. That just goes to show how amateurish I am, sergeant."

VIII

SERGEANT ACKLEY began pacing the floor. His thumb nail scraped his jaw.

"Well," he wanted to know at length, and his voice was heavy with sarcasm, "what would you have done if you'd become convinced Barkley had the real diamonds?"

Lester Leith bowed.

"Then, of course, I'd have telephoned you, my dear sergeant. But perhaps I shouldn't have said that. You mentioned anything I said could be used against me."

Ackley snorted angrily.

"A hell of a yarn. Do you expect a jury to believe it?"

Lester Leith shrugged his shoulders, spread his palms.

"That, of course, would be another matter. I presume my attorney would deal with that question. Your case, my

dear sergeant, would rest upon the word of a man who swore he never had diamonds, but had pearls. Upon the testimony of another who conspired to defeat the customs. Upon the statement of still a third individual who swore that all he ever had was glass in a cream bottle. If they should all tell the story you wanted them to tell they would all be forced to confess to crimes. And juries don't like to believe criminals. I believe, my dear sergeant, the State has to prove its charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

"I rather fancy my attorney would advise me to say nothing, sergeant. He'd probably content himself with commenting to the jury that there had been no *corpus delicti* proved.

"You see, your entire case is predicated upon the stealing of diamonds, but Masterson could never admit he had any diamonds, in the first place. The British government doesn't look kindly upon diamond thefts, sergeant. So, all in all, I rather fancy Masterson will stick to his pearl story.

"And, then again, even supposing you got the story you wanted from all of the self-confessed crooks, do you mean to say it's a crime to drop broken glass in a cream bottle?"

"No, no, sergeant, never mind answering the question. I can see the answer in your face. I rather fancied it wasn't a crime. I'd have spilled them into the gutter; but that's a crime, putting sharp objects upon a highway, the danger of punctures, you know, sergeant.

"Do you know, sergeant, you've given my amateur detective tendencies of thought another impetus. Come to think of it, suppose Masterson had really brought in diamonds— Why, if he'd been robbed he couldn't complain. He'll dismiss his charges against Gun-

dleson. He'll have to. Then the entire matter will drop.

"How clever it would have been for some master mind, not an amateurish mind, sergeant, but some professional mind, to have reasoned all that out, and then perhaps found the diamonds. But, of course, that's merely a flight of the imagination, a bit of pleasant speculation in criminology. For there weren't any diamonds, and that, of course, clinches the matter—"

The banging of the door interrupted the sentence.

Lester Leith turned quietly reproachful eyes upon his valet.

"Do you know, Scuttle, it's just like I mentioned. The sergeant storms out of here without even bothering to wish me a good night. And he didn't wait for the coffee.

"Tut, tut, Scuttle, I can't think a man with so emotional a mind would make a good officer. And did you notice how he verified my prediction, Scuttle? He accused me of hi-jacking again. Fortunate, this time, I had an alibi. There was nothing to hi-jack. I gave rather than received. True, I only gave broken glass.

"But I had one triumph, Scuttle, a very minor triumph, but a triumph nevertheless. And Sergeant Ackley didn't even compliment me upon it. You'll remember that I said it was an even money bet that Barkley would hide the cream jar.

"Come to think of it, Sergeant Ackley mentioned that Barkley had buried the jar. In the yard, I guess. Well, I bet even on it, Scuttle. It was a good even money bet.

"And, by the way, Scuttle, my suit

got quite badly battered around to-night. I saw what I thought was a mad dog, and I climbed a tree. The dog wasn't mad at all, Scuttle, wasn't even ruffled. But, Scuttle, I didn't mention about my clothes before because I'll venture Sergeant Ackley would have thought the condition of my garments had something to do with the imaginary theft of the diamonds that he couldn't prove ever existed. In fact, Scuttle, that's a good even money wager. Do you want to take me, for, say, two months' salary? I'll call the dear sergeant back. He's probably checking over the search of my car right now.

"You won't take me, Scuttle? Tut, tut. I'm afraid you haven't true sporting blood.

"But let's have the coffee, Scuttle. And bring in a cup and join me. Really, Scuttle, I feel lonesome. I had looked forward to a little chat over the coffee with the dear sergeant. I do so like to get the slant of the professional mind, Scuttle.

"And I'm improving myself. I made an even money bet to-night and won out. No, no, Scuttle, don't look at me that way. I know you're like the dear sergeant and am wondering what I won. Tut, tut, Scuttle, you're developing almost a professional mind! You must read something on reincarnation. I'd like to discuss your case with you. It's even money that you're a reincarnated police detective, Scuttle. The psychological traits have held over in you to a remarkable extent, Scuttle.

"But we digress, and that's a bad sign. The coffee, Scuttle."

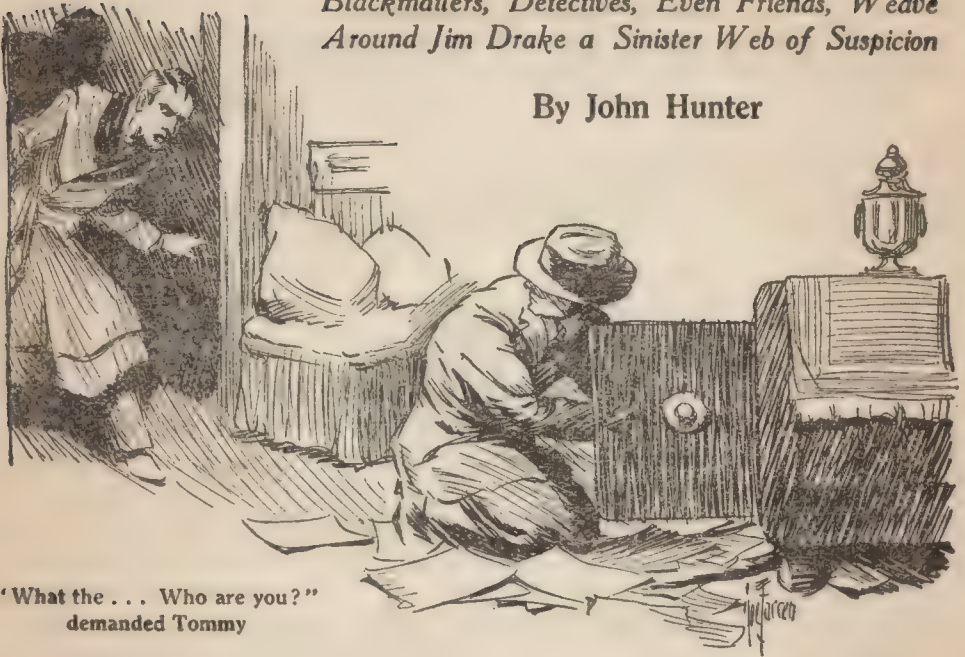
THE END



The Secret

*Blackmailers, Detectives, Even Friends, Weave
Around Jim Drake a Sinister Web of Suspicion*

By John Hunter



"What the . . . Who are you?"
demanded Tommy

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

THE night Harvey Westerham, wealthy London book collector, was discovered dead from a poison dart in his library, a note was found on the table reading: "'Kaa closing down. Good night everybody. Mr. Brown." The wall safe was opened and rifled. Westerham's stepdaughter, Patricia—"Pat"—Revill, was at a dinner dance with Tommy Brook and Jim Drake. Detective Richardson, of Scotland Yard, learned that Jim Drake was absent from the dance a short time near midnight, although he offers an alibi. The safe job Richardson traces to Bill Helston, a notorious safe-cracker, and concludes that two men must have entered the library that night. Richardson suspects Jim Drake of

being "Mr. Brown." Meanwhile Drake has urgently requested Tommy Brook to call at his apartment.

CHAPTER IX

The Mocking Safe

PAT dined that evening, by invitation, with Luigi Venetzi and his wife, and on her return home, at a little after ten o'clock, she found a bulky envelope awaiting her. It had been posted in Fleet Street in the afternoon, and delivered by the late post. When she opened it, she found that it contained a letter and statement from Stevens and Stevens and Nephew, the firm of solicitors who had always acted for Harvey Westerham.

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for July 27

All that evening, though she had made valiant efforts to appear as cheerful as circumstances might permit, she had been fretted with a fierce and growing anxiety regarding Jim Drake. Believing everything he told her without even stopping to question it, she had found doubt of him in those moments when he had been so anxious about Richardson's questions; and with the doubt she began, for the first time, to consider his absence from the Magnificent on the night Harvey Westerham was killed.

It was natural, logical, that she should pursue the same line of thought as Tommy Brook, to ask herself if it were credible that a stockbroker should call a client away from a dance at midnight in order to discuss business with him.

The more she thought of it, the more absurd it appeared, try though she might to believe it. Besides—Drake's agitation had hinted that he did not wish Richardson to get in touch with Jackson, did not, in fact, wish the officers of the law to test the verity of his statement.

The argument dwelt with her while she talked to Venetzi and his wife. It repeated itself again and again as Harvey Westerham's car carried her home. She wanted to be loyal to Drake. She wanted to believe everything he said, to accept without question everything he did. And yet—he had told a lie, and feared, not so much that she would discover it, but that the police might do so.

For some moments she experienced frantic terror, as though actual danger threatened her, so that she wanted to cry aloud. She felt that her nerve and her self-possession were deserting her. She was urged to go to Drake, tell him exactly what she was thinking, and ask him to explain. She went indoors

miserably distressed, and found the lawyers' letter.

Study of it, she thought, might aid her momentarily to forget her fears regarding Drake. She tore open the envelope and spread its contents on the table before her.

There was a covering letter, in which probate was talked about, and an intimation that in the meantime sufficient funds would be at her disposal to enable her to carry on. Death duties were mentioned, and the amount stated.

It seemed that Harvey Westerham had largely left his affairs in the hands of this very reputable firm of lawyers. Anthony Stevens, who signed the letter, informed Pat that Mr. Westerham had always abjured business, had wished to devote his time constantly to his hobbies, his books, his collections, and had given the lawyers power to act for him in all matters connected with his investments. As these consisted of gilt-edged securities, they had merely attended to the drawing of dividends, made out his income tax returns, and generally kept the easy machine of his affairs running smoothly.

The result of this arrangement was that Stevens and Stevens and Nephew were able, within a few days, to submit to Pat the exact sum of her inheritance. The attached papers gave details of this.

Anthony Stevens, who was personally handling the matter, was a bright young man with a gift for detail, and the list under Pat's hand was surprisingly complete.

There was a record of investments, with the prices Westerham had paid for them and the current market quotations, the yield, less income tax, on each being added, with the dates the dividends were due.

There was an expert valuation of the

house, and a list of its furnishings and their value. This list was compiled, so Mr. Stevens said, from an inventory taken recently in connection with a fire insurance, and might be considered accurate. Some of the objects d'art Pat found to be very valuable. The house and its contents added twenty thousand pounds to the sum represented by gilt-edged securities.

So, thought Pat, she was the possessor of fifty thousand pounds represented by easy negotiable securities, a house on a valuable site in the heart of London, filled with precious and beautiful things.

Below the list was a mass of single-spaced typescript, consisting mainly of comments on the various items in the list.

One of these comments attracted Pat's attention. She read it cursorily at first, and then again with increased attention—and again.

Briefly, the comment informed Pat that "our Mr. Anthony Stevens" had personally superintended the checking of the inventory of the contents of the house, and wondered whether she could supply him with any information on a point which had arisen during that process of checking.

He reminded Pat that, on the night of the tragedy, the two safes in Harvey Westerham's library had been broken open by force. One of these was a large ordinary square office safe which would offer little resistance to an expert burglar. The other was a fairly small and exceptionally powerful wall safe governed by a complicated combination lock.

Both the examination of the police and of Mr. Stevens himself had revealed the fact that the large, square office safe had held little of value. Mainly, its contents had consisted of

books in which Harvey Westerham had recorded his collecting transactions, of documents, such as receipts, *et cetera*, received in connection with the routine of his household, and other unimportant possessions such as a man might intrust to a receptacle which could not be expected efficiently to safeguard anything placed within it.

There might, said Mr. Stevens, have been a small sum in loose cash, but so accurate were Mr. Westerham's accounts, that such a sum would have been negligible.

But the wall safe was a different proposition. It was, Mr. Stevens was assured, one of the finest of its kind, almost impregnable to any but the cleverest of cracksmen—the kind of safe, in fact, in which a person might keep their most valuable possessions and feel that they rested securely.

While the books and other impedimenta in the large square safe had been left untouched by the burglar or murderer, the police had found this powerful safe absolutely empty.

And yet—and this was heavily underlined by Mr. Anthony Stevens—nowhere in their, or his, records of Harvey Westerham's affairs were they able to discover what that safe had contained. There was no missing link in the chain of his financial dealings, nothing to show that a large sum of money had been spent on an unrecorded object or objects.

Apparently the extraordinarily powerful wall safe had held nothing.

Pat studied this again and again. It fastened on her imagination—the empty safe, the mockery of power that guarded nothing, and slowly she began to ask herself what Mr. Brown had taken from that safe on the night he loosed death at the studious recluse who had always treated her so kindly.

Impulse sent her hand to the bell, and she told the maid who answered it to send the butler to her. To him she said: "I want to go into the library, and I want you to come with me. I don't like to go in alone."

They went together. Pat had not entered the room since she left it after seeing Westerham's distorted form sprawled in the chair behind his desk, and she shuddered as the butler held the door open for her and switched on the lights.

The place was all in order, dusted and cleaned every day, and the only reminder of Mr. Brown's visit lay in the still twisted doors of the unrepaired safes. Pat had forgotten to have them attended to.

She glanced at the old square safe, its books and papers now bundled and docketed by the assistants of the energetic Mr. Anthony Stevens, and then she turned to the wall safe. Its black maw seemed to leer at her as she looked at it. Its mutilated door hung down hideously, as though a smashed face looked into hers.

Mutely it challenged her, defied her, jeered at her—frightened her.

For that was her dominant emotion as she looked at it. She was afraid. Again she asked herself what Mr. Brown might have taken from that safe. Was it to get what the safe contained that he had come to Harvey Westerham's house that night, bringing death with him?

For a moment she had a wild fancy that the safe had no back, that the shadows cast over its interior by the ceiling lamps extended limitless into a labyrinthine secrecy where strange things lurked and whispered.

She left the library at last, and the butler followed her, locking the door after him. She went to bed and tried

to sleep, and in her restlessness a dark face mocked her, featureless, formless, mutilated.

CHAPTER X

Doubling For Jim

DRAKE, Tommy Brook observed, was amazingly agitated for a man whom Tommy had always regarded as extremely self-contained. His first words electrified Tommy.

"There are about eighty flats in this block, so that nobody watching outside can definitely say that you have entered this one."

"Watching outside!" bleated Tommy.

"Yes—police," said Drake, quietly.

Tommy got up. He poured himself a stiff brandy and soda without waiting for an invitation to do so. These were moments, he thought, when a man needed spiritual sustenance. What with Lallie—and a hundred guineas—and police—

"Tommy," added Drake, "I'm trying to speak calmly, although I'll admit to you that I'm frightened. I'm not a superhuman sort of person and I've been undergoing a dreadful strain. I've got badly rattled. I've been badly rattled ever since—that night. I've made mistakes, errors of omission and commission, and unless I do something swiftly I shall find myself in a mess."

Tommy lit a cigarette. "You might tell a fellow what it's all about. I never was good at riddles."

"You haven't got to be," said Drake. "Suppose I ask you to take me on trust?" He put out his hand as Tommy's lips moved, and Tommy decided to take a drink instead of protesting. There was a little twisted smile on Drake's lips. "Sounds like a line out of melodrama, doesn't it?

You know—I can't reveal the secret now, but you must believe in me for the sake of the days gone by. But that's the position, Tommy, as far as I'm concerned. You're the one man in the world to whom I can turn at this moment, and if you let me down I'm probably stymied for good and all."

Tommy swallowed the rest of the brandy and poured out more. "Stand on me," he said. "I'm with you, Drake."

"Good man. I want you to sleep here to-night."

"I haven't got any kit," said Tommy.

"I've got plenty. My man's away for the night. I sent him away on purpose. I've got something to do that I ought to have done days and days ago—something I put off."

"Why did you put it off?" asked Tommy, for want of something to say—for he had no idea what Drake meant.

Drake hesitated a moment, and then said quietly: "I wanted to be near Pat."

Tommy said nothing; but some of the suspicion vanished from his eyes.

"I've got to work quickly," continued Drake, "so I must make my explanations as brief as possible. This night you're going to be me. I want you to cover my escape from this flat. It can be done simply and easily, and the matter of the actual escape can be left to me. In the morning I shall return and just walk in at the front door. It won't matter who sees me. Are you on?"

"But why—why? Hang it all, Drake. You're dodging the police! I mean to say—"

"I know." Drake was grimly persistent. "I've already admitted that. I've already asked you to accept the

situation and my word, without questions."

"Is it anything to do with Mr. Brown?" asked Tommy, quickly.

Drake looked at him. It seemed to Tommy that Drake's face closed, like a door suddenly slammed. "Will you do it?" he asked at last.

"My God!" groaned Tommy. "I suppose so. What have I got to do?"

"This. We're of the same height and build. Unless you threw your shadow in profile on a window blind you could easily be mistaken for me, especially if I had already impressed a watcher with the fact that you are me. Understand that?"

Tommy goggled and swallowed more brandy and soda.

"I'm going into my bedroom. I'm going to walk across the room between the light and the window. You will already be in the room, standing against the wall beside the window, with a book in your hand. You will take your place there before I switch up the lights. I shall stand for a moment, in profile, before the blind, and then walk toward you, so that my shadow leaves the blind. You will then walk from your position, with your back to the blind and the window, to a chair already placed for you, and sit down so that your shadow continues to be on the blind. It will look as though I've gone to a bookcase for a book. I will then work round the wall, out of the room, and out of the flat in a way I have already devised and which I need not tell you. You will sit for half an hour reading and then go to bed, taking care before you undress to walk straight past the light, so that your shadow is not cast on the blind while you take your things off. Is that all clear?"

Tommy put his hand to his head.

"Say it slowly," he pleaded. "I'm feeling a bit upset to-night, what with one thing and another."

Drake repeated his plan, and at last Tommy grasped it. He found that in practice it worked remarkably well, although Drake had to prompt him to do his bit. Drake, standing before the blind, in profile, lit a cigarette, so that his shadow stayed sufficiently long on the blind to convince anybody outside of his identity. Tommy, puffing smoke vigorously, stepped forth from his hiding place and dropped hastily into the chair, swinging the book as he did so. Drake, after a last admonition, left the room, and a minute or two later Tommy heard the outer door of the flat close softly.

Tommy had taken the book haphazard from one of Drake's bookcases, and when he opened it he found that it was a medical textbook. While this surprised him—for he did not know that Drake was interested in medicine save as something administered occasionally by doctors—he soon forgot his surprise in his interest. He found in his hands a mass of information regarding half the diseases endured by the human race. He staggered from the symptoms of one fell affliction to another. In three-quarters of an hour he became convinced that he was suffering from cancer, consumption, angina pectoris and acute kidney trouble. He found that alcohol was deadly poison, and that nicotine should be avoided as the plague.

He had already decided what epitaph should be carved on his tombstone, had reached the point when he was about to hurl his cigarette aside and pour the brandy and soda away, when he shut the book firmly and tossed it on to the table.

"If I'm going to die," he muttered,

"I'll jolly well die without knowing what's the matter with me. Phew! Fancy being a doctor."

He bathed in a state of depression, and defiantly smoked another cigarette while he dried himself. He put the brandy decanter by his bedside as an added act of hostility and dropped between the sheets.

It was somewhere about 2 A.M. that a sound awakened him, and he sat up in bed with a start.

He listened intently. The darkness of his room was utterly impenetrable, as though a cloak wrapped him about. Outside the block of flats there was now hardly any sound.

He started as though somebody had dug him in the ribs with a walking stick. There was the noise once more—a stealthy noise, as though some cunning animal worked furtively in the darkness that filled the flat.

Tommy slipped out of bed, groped for and found Drake's dressing gown, and put it on. Normally a heavy sleeper, he was not yet quite awake. His never alert brain was very slowly beginning to function, and its first efforts were toward indicating that Tommy should investigate the source of the noise. Tommy's limbs blindly obeyed its orders. He went out of the bedroom, across the little passageway and into Drake's sitting room.

He made no sound in his bare feet, and his right hand preceded him into the sitting room, fumbling for the switch just around the jamb of the door. The result was that Tommy's actual appearance in the room coincided with the leaping to life of the ceiling lights, and, as though a magician had waved a wand, there materialized at once a confrontation, a discovery, and a dramatic tableau.

A man was on his knees before the

small safe Drake kept in this room. The door of the safe was open, and there were papers spread about on the floor. The man turned his face over his right shoulder as Tommy and the electric light put in a simultaneous appearance, and, having done so, remained still for a second, Tommy imitating him, his head thrust forward, his jaw dropped, and his eyes goggling.

"What the—what— Who are you?" Tommy demanded.

The man got up slowly, a stiffly built little chap, Tommy observed, with a not unpleasant red face.

"It's a fair cop, guv'nor," he said.

Tommy uttered a little cry. "Then they do say it!" he exclaimed. There was a light in his eyes. His brain was now hitting on all six. He understood the whole situation, and felt himself master of it.

"Say what?" asked the burglar, looking puzzled.

"That about it being a fair cop. I thought it was only used in comic papers." He closed the door and advanced into the room.

The burglar considered him. Though he was slightly bewildered by the talk and attitude of his captor, he was yet able to think clearly and swiftly, to tread warily. Tommy, being some five feet eleven in height, looked big in Drake's voluminous dressing gown, and the burglar, having weighed his chances in equal combat, discounted them rapidly. Besides, he might hurt this man and get caught after all, and that would be a serious matter. Robbery was one thing. Robbery with violence was distinctly another.

"What's your name?" asked Tommy.

The man hesitated, and then realized that immediately the police arrived he would be identified, so spoke the truth.

"Helston, sir." He was still considering Tommy. "You're not Mr. Drake, are you? I've seen his photo in the picture papers, and you're not like him. Besides—"

"What?" asked Tommy.

"I saw him go out hours ago."

"You did!" exclaimed Tommy. "Then that's done it!"

Bill Helston shook his head. He was beginning to feel his ground a little more. He actually smiled as he replied. "It's all right, sir. The 'tec didn't spot him, if that's what you mean. I was inside the block. That's how I came to see him. It was because I was inside that I didn't know you were still there. I couldn't see a light on the outside windows, naturally." Bill cocked his head to one side and eyed Tommy slyly.

Before this shrewd guessing Tommy wilted slightly, but soon recovered. He had a real live burglar before him, and would not have missed the meeting for worlds. For the moment he forgot his duty as a lawful citizen, forgot that the honest must league themselves with the police against the dishonest, and made the most of this unique opportunity.

"Let's have a drink," he said. "I'd like to talk to you."

Bill Helston uttered an audible gasp, and then once more looked sly. "What's the game?" he asked.

"Eh?" Tommy looked round from picking up the brandy decanter. "Game? Oh, I see. Nothing. I want to talk to you. You're the first burglar I've ever met. That's all. What'll you have? I'm drinking brandy myself, because I swallowed a lot of bubbly at dinner. But there's whisky if you prefer it."

Bill Helston accepted the drink, took a cigarette, and, at Tommy's invitation,

seated himself. He was not yet quite sure whether he had to deal with a lunatic or a supremely cunning man, and this doubt showed itself in a swiftly asked question.

"Are you trying to keep me here till Mr. Drake comes in?" he demanded; and, asking this, he suddenly remembered Mr. Brown. The hand that held his glass of whisky shook slightly.

"No," said Tommy. "How did you open that safe?"

Bill eyed the article with the contempt of a master for the product of an inferior. "That," he said. "Safe, did you call it? Unsafe's what I'd say about it."

Tommy cackled with laughter. "Very good. I must remember that. But how did you open it?"

Bill displayed a large bunch of curious keys. "One of these and a file and fingers that can feel properly," he said. "Any fool could open one of them things. You could if I showed you for ten minutes."

"That's all right," said Tommy mildly. "We're all friends here. And how did you get into the flat?"

"Unlocked the door. Anybody can open front doors." Mr. Helston drank carelessly. "I know half a dozen cheap sneaks that could go through this flat easy. It's not my line. I do big stuff."

Tommy nodded admiringly. "Tell me about some of your jobs," he urged.

Bill Helston winked. "I've only done one. This is my second crime, and you've caught me red-handed, as the saying is; though what it means I don't know."

"Why did you pick on this flat?"

Helston shrugged his shoulders. "It was a sudden temptation, sir, and that's the honest truth. I saw Mr. Drake's man go out. Then I saw Mr. Drake go out, and knew his name be-

cause I remembered having seen his picture. I couldn't resist a temptation to break in. It wasn't altogether my fault. I was tempted and fell, like a girl in a book I once read."

"I read a book like that, too," said Tommy. "At least, I didn't read it all. It was a four-part story in a magazine. I found it on a dentist's table. I was waiting to have a tooth out." He heaved a little sigh and sipped his drink morosely. "I was hoping you'd have done a lot of jobs, so that you could tell me about them."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Bill.

There was a lengthy silence, during which Tommy smoked and studied Bill Helston.

"You know," said Tommy at last. "I ought to have you locked up. What do you reckon you'd get?"

"Five years, sir," said Bill.

"What! For just doing this?"

"Yes, sir. It's the police. They get down on a chap and don't give him a chance. Do you know, sir, the way the police behaves is something cruel sometimes."

"I agree with you there," said Tommy. "I was pinched only the other day myself. The copper said I was doing sixty, but I know it wasn't more than forty-five."

"That's nothing," declared Bill. "You ought to start burgling and see what lies they'd tell about you."

Tommy stroked his hair back. "I expect they would," he agreed; and continued to study Mr. Helston.

There was something about Bill that Tommy liked. He had taken his capture philosophically, and not a whine had passed his lips. He had not begged of Tommy to refrain from calling in the police, and he drank whisky and soda, Tommy observed, like a man. His glass was already empty.

Tommy recharged it. "Well," he said as he passed the syphon across to Bill, "you'd better drink up and I'll ring for the police."

"All right, sir." Bill stood up. "I'd like to have the honor of drinking your good health, sir. You're a real sport, and, if I may say so, there ain't many about these days."

He swallowed the whisky and soda at a draft and put the glass down. "And no heel taps," he grinned.

Tommy took a deep breath. "Look here," he said. "Pinched anything?"

"No, sir." The faintly flickering flame of hope which had been kindled in Bill's breast as the conversation proceeded now began to burn more brightly. "Search me. Here! I'll turn me pockets out." He proceeded to do this, and removed the jacket and waistcoat and handed them to Tommy for inspection. It was obvious that he was telling the truth.

Tommy gave him back his garments, he donned them and refilled his pockets.

"You can go," said Tommy.

Bill made no movement, no extravagant gesture of gratitude; but Tommy saw something leap into his eyes and vanish. After all, however philosophical a man might endeavor to be, five years was a long time.

Bill said: "You mean that, sir? My word, I said you was a sport, and I was right." He walked with Tommy into the hall and paused at the front door. "Ever have a bit on?" he asked, in the low voice with which racing information—if the etiquette of the sport be properly observed—should be imparted.

"Often," said Tommy, and his eyes lighted up. "Had a tip for the Lincoln only the other day. 'Rat-a-plan.' A detective told me."

Bill sliced his hand flatly through the air. "That hatrack!" he said, with scorn. "I know an animal that could run the race backward and leave Rat-a-plan down the course." He whispered in Tommy's ear, though they were very much alone. "You do it, sir. Have a bit each way. Here, I'll leave you my address, and if that animal doesn't come up, you tell me what you think about me. I've got it right."

He gave his Catford address to Tommy, and opened the front door. "Good night, sir. And don't forget—each way."

"Thanks very much," said Tommy gratefully, and watched Bill walk, whistling, toward the main staircase. His original intention had been to depart by the fire escape, but there was now no necessity for that. He was a friend of one of the sleepers in the flats.

He wished Richardson could have been awaiting him at the foot of the stairs. As he went down he rehearsed exactly what he would have said to the big detective, exactly how he'd have conducted himself had such a moment of triumph been vouchsafed to him.

In the street, his thoughts turned to Tommy. He labelled Tommy a good sport. He was not so much grateful to Tommy as appreciative of his sportsmanship. He had, he reflected, told the truth when he said he had stolen nothing. And yet he was carrying something away with him, something he had learned while going through Drake's safe, something that dwelt in his memory and opened up a wide field of almost incredible speculation. That impulse which had made him resolve to investigate the home of the man who denied the existence of Mr. Brown had been something more than an impulse—perhaps an inspiration.

And back in the flat the first thing Tommy did was to write down Bill Helston's name and address and place the paper carefully in his jacket pocket.

CHAPTER XI

Pat Takes a Hand

TOMMY, splashing in his bath and plaintively voicing a query set to music as to why the hyena continually laughs, checked his vocal efforts and shouted: "Is that you, Drake? Good man. I'll be out in a jiff. Got on all right?"

"Yes," said Drake from the other side of the door. "I suppose you've had a good night."

"So so. Had a burglar."

"What?"

"Fact. A chappie broke in. Awfully clever fellow. Simply opened your front door with a key and did the same with the safe. I had a chat with him."

He heard Drake utter an exclamation, slowly emerged from the bath, dried himself, and, with Drake's dressing gown on, went into the study. Drake was looking at the safe and at the papers, which still were littered round about it.

"I left them," said Tommy. "Private papers. Nothing to do with me. Knew you'd be back, and all that."

"What did you do with the fellow?" asked Drake quietly. He looked very tired. His hands, as he picked up the papers, were shaking slightly.

"Well." Tommy was now conscious of serious omission. "I had a couple of drinks with him."

Drake looked up. "My word, Tommy. You're the limit, aren't you? What else?"

"Well," repeated Tommy, "we had a talk about burgling and the police. And as he hadn't pinched any-

thing I let him go. Live and let live, old man. You know. The qualities of mercy are not strained, as that writing fellow said. And—and all that."

Drake put the papers back into the safe. The lock still worked perfectly. Bill Helston was a master of his craft.

"Do you know how long he'd been here?" he asked.

"Not long. Couldn't have been. I spotted him like lightning. Didn't give him a chance."

"Except the biggest of all," said Drake with a crooked smile. He looked at the safe, and added: "I wonder."

"Wonder what?" asked Tommy.

"I was going to say," said Drake, after a pause, "that I wonder why you're such an ass, Tommy, but I won't, because you've been a good pal to me in the last twelve hours. Perhaps, after all, it was as well to let him go, if he'd stolen nothing. Do you know anything about him? Did he tell you anything?"

"Yes. He gave me another certainty for the Lincoln, and his name and address. Everybody's giving me certs for that race. It's awfully confusing."

"Give me his name and address," said Drake.

"You won't report him?" asked Tommy. "You see, I told him he could go. I mean—letting a fellow down."

"All right, Tommy. I'll be kind to your dishonest friend. But I'd like to know who the gentleman was who took liberties with my property. It's perfectly natural, isn't it?"

"Oh, quite." Tommy gave Bill Helston's name and address. Drake jotted them down.

"Now, Tommy, I found a note from Pat that caught the last post last night. She wants to see me this morning. I'm going to get a couple hours' sleep, and

I want you to stay here and see that I wake up. Will you? You can fudge yourself some breakfast, if you want any, and read the newspapers."

He left Tommy wallowing among the kitchen utensils, and, fully dressed, dropped onto his bed and slept soundly. Tommy, having mutilated an egg and ruined a couple of rashers of bacon, consumed dry toast and a weary-looking liquid he called tea, and asked himself if Drake had looked relieved when he announced that he had let Bill Helston go, instead of handing him over to the police.

In due course he awakened Drake. Drake had a cold plunge, generally furnished himself, and announced that he felt fit. They parted outside the block of flats and Tommy went his way blithely until he remembered that this was the morning when Lallie Dumayne proposed to spend his hundred guineas.

Pat was anxiously awaiting Drake's arrival and she took him into the little room on the ground floor which had always been reserved for her own use. There she showed him the papers she had received from Stevens and Stevens and Nephew.

"I wanted your advice, Jim," she said. There was a little appeal in her eyes. She wanted more than his advice in connection with the papers. She wanted all his confidence. Her expression showed him that she played a game of make-believe, that she maintained a pretense that there was no invisible barrier between them. He felt hurt and sorry, and wished, not for the first time, that he had left undone all that he had done in the past year.

Wishing this, he also maintained the pretense. He picked up the papers and ran through them. "What's the difficulty?" he asked.

She indicated the comments sub-

scribed by Mr. Anthony Stevens. They were sitting side by side at the table, and Pat's hair was very close to Drake's cheek. He suddenly turned and buried his face in it, kissing it.

When he drew back she was looking at him with shining eyes, her lips smiling, relieved, pitifully pleased, grateful. "You dear," he said, softly.

Her hand sought his. He knew that for the moment she could not speak; but he felt her finger pressure, read more in her face than her tongue could have told him, and found his soul racked, found self-hatred flaring within him, and, with it, for the the first time, self-pity.

Now she was closer to him, hugging herself, glad. That kiss had done more than any explanations he could have offered. She believed in him once more, for she was so eager and ready to believe, so anxious to thrust doubt from her thoughts. Her hand was under his as they studied the paper together.

"This is what I wanted to see you about, Jim," she said. And she pointed out the observations on the emptiness of the powerful wall safe. "What do you think of it?"

Drake read rapidly, and when he had finished observed: "He's a smart young fellow, Mr. Anthony Stevens. He doesn't miss much, does he?"

If there was a tinge of bitterness in his voice, Pat, in her newfound happiness, did not perceive it.

"Uncle Harvey always said he was very clever. But what do you make of it, Jim?"

Drake shrugged his shoulders. "Much ado about nothing. Let's leave off imagining for a bit and look at the cold facts. A safe is broken open. Nothing is found in it by the police. It seems, from the evidence, that noth-

ing was in it—though that, after all, is surmise. Anyhow, we'll accept it as fact. "Why shouldn't a man have a powerful wall safe and, for the time being, keep nothing in it?"

"Why should he?" countered Pat. "That safe has been in Uncle Harvey's library ever since I came home from school in Paris. Surely he used it."

"From time to time, I expect he did," agreed Drake. "But just at the time of his death it happened to be empty. I fail to see any mystery."

Pat considered. "It sounds desperately logical—what you say, Jim; and yet I feel that it's wrong. I went and had a look at that safe last night, and, somehow, it seemed to mock me, as though it hid something away, something invisible. I was a bit frightened."

Drake squeezed her fingers. "You mustn't stay here," he said. "You're allowing yourself to get nerves. Why don't you take a suite at the Magnificent for a little while? I worry about you while you're here alone."

"You mustn't. Because you'll only make yourself ill. Besides, now I have no intention of going away—none whatever."

Pat's tone and expression were indicative of tremendous resolution, and Drake glanced at her with surprise.

"I mean it, Jim," she said. "I feel that all this time I've been a lay figure in this matter—that I've endured the loss of Uncle Harvey, and have done nothing toward capturing his murderer. Now I'm really going to see what I can do."

Drake laughed quietly. "Amateur detective, eh? Pat, you'll find the rôle difficult."

"I don't know," said Pat. "Maybe in certain directions I shall fail, but surely in one of them I am in the best position to succeed."

"And that is?"

"The discovery of what Uncle Harvey kept in that safe. After all, I have the fullest possible liberty to explore his possessions."

"But there was nothing in the safe, Pat. Investigation has already shown that. For the time being it was not in use. The burglar wasted his efforts."

"I don't agree with you, Jim," said Pat, with quiet confidence. "You can call it intuition, wild guessing, perhaps, even fear-prompted imagination if you like, but I'm confident that it was to secure what the safe contained that Mr. Brown killed Uncle Harvey."

Drake did not answer at once. Already fretted and shaken, he was in no condition coolly to face what he knew might be the makings of a crisis. At last he said: "I shouldn't, if I were you, Pat. I should leave it all to the police and go away."

"But why, Jim? I don't want to go away." Pat's eyes were alight. "And now I'll tell you something else. This morning I've made a start on my investigations, and I've already made a discovery that I think should be communicated to the police. You remember that there were signs that two men had climbed the mews wall that night?"

"Yes," Drake answered in a low voice.

"There was another man came into the garden as well—a third man. I only found it out by chance. There's a door in the wall, and it has not been used for ever so long. The lock, through disuse, got out of order, and the door was only kept fastened because it was absolutely jammed in its frame. Somebody used that door. The frame is split and the wood shows white, indicating that the crack has only just developed. The accumulated

dirt round the door has fallen away. Somebody pushed at the door from the outside, in the mews. There are the smudges of gloved hands on the dirt that covers the paint."

Drake took a long breath. "That's very observant of you, Pat," he said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Tell Mr. Richardson at once. Don't you realize how tremendously important it is, Jim? Three people broke in that night, because I can conceive of no other occasion on which the door should be forced. And one of those three was Mr. Brown. It's a step nearer, isn't it?"

"Or a step further away," said Drake, "in that there are now three visitors to be discovered and identified, and, from them, you have to select Mr. Brown."

Pat continued to look confident and resolute in a deliciously feminine fashion. "I don't agree, Jim. It must be a step nearer. Suppose this third man is Mr. Brown? Had I not noticed that the door had been used nobody would have looked for him at all."

Drake chuckled. "That's wonderful, Pat. I should ring up Richardson and tell him. Or shall I do it for you?"

"You do it," said Pat. "And don't laugh at me, Jim, because I'm frightfully serious and I'm going to do my best."

"Well, don't fix the guilt on Tommy, will you?" said Drake, as he reached for the telephone. "Because I understand that he's going in for the film business and it would spoil his plans."

He called for the number of New Scotland Yard.

Switched through to Richardson, he said: "Good morning, inspector. Drake speaking. Miss Revill is with me. I'm speaking from her house. She's made

a rather important discovery—two, in fact."

"Oh, yes?" said Richardson dryly.

Drake told him of the communication from Mr. Anthony Stevens, and Pat's observation of the door in the mews wall.

"I know about the door," said Richardson. "But compliment Miss Revill for me, will you?"

Drake slid his hand over the mouthpiece and looked up at Pat. "Richardson already knows about the door. He saw it for himself." Drake's eyes were dancing with laughter. "He sends his compliments."

"Rotter!" said Pat.

"About that safe—" began Richardson, at the other end.

Drake interrupted him. "It seems simple enough, doesn't it? The safe didn't happen to be in use. That's all."

"Of course," agreed Richardson instantly. "Is there anything else?"

"No. I don't think so." Drake was a little disturbed by Richardson's immediate agreement with his view of the emptiness of the wall safe.

He was about to add a casual phrase to wind up the conversation, when Richardson went on: "Well—good-by. By the way, Mr. Drake, did you enjoy your trip last night?"

Before Drake could answer, the receiver at the other end was dropped into place.

Drake left Pat as soon as he could. He wanted to be alone and think, for now he knew that it was war to the death between himself and Richardson. The fact that the big detective inspector had been apparently so unwise as to indicate to Drake that he knew of his absence from his flat of the previous night showed Drake that Richardson was very sure of himself, had, in fact, garnered such information as he

felt justified him in attempting to rattle Drake by a curt and unexpected disclosure.

Drake, walking away from Pat's house, set his teeth. He would not be rattled at this stage, if he could help it. Heaven knew that his nerves were already frayed almost to breaking point. He was no superman who could walk unmoved amid perils and treat them light-heartedly. He was rapidly approaching the point when he dreaded the sight of a policeman's uniform.

Richardson loomed larger and larger in his imagination. In his short acquaintance with the detective, he had come to appreciate his abilities tremendously. Richardson, as he himself had said to Pat, was no fancy detective of fiction. He could not pick up a cigarette end and a button and reconstruct a crime by sitting in a chair and looking at them.

But he had a wonderful pertinacity, a native shrewdness that sometimes amounted to inspiration, and behind him was the marvelously efficient and tireless organization of the Metropolitan Police. Richardson, thought Drake, in an imaginative moment, was like a great dog wolf running a forest trail with his pack behind him. He would run that trail till he caught his man, and gave him over to the pack. Drake shuddered.

He felt that he would have given ten thousand pounds to have known exactly how much Richardson had learned and what he was doing. The secrecy of Richardson's movements magnified their threat. Drake felt isolated, near to helplessness. Once he thought of surrender, but thrust the thought aside. He would at the least fight to the last ditch.

From Richardson he turned to the man who broke into his flat—Bill

Helston. Was that a chance burglary, or had it some significant connection with the affair of Mr. Brown? Tommy said that Helston had stolen nothing, and the brief scrutiny Drake had given his effects seemed to confirm this. Yet—those papers had been spread about in such fashion that they were easily read. And Tommy Brook had been in the flat all night. That was not to be forgotten.

Tommy Brook—who let the burglar go— But Tommy was an imbecile.

CHAPTER XII

Crooks Convene

BILL HELSTON, having carried off the honors in connection with his burgling of Drake's flat, returned home in a state of high triumph, a condition which prevailed with him all the following day until the evening, when hard and brutal fact forced itself on his notice.

He had failed to achieve possession of any of that money which was now so necessary to him. His winnings at Gatwick had been invaluable in this time of financial stress, but they had been offset to some extent by a number of disastrous plunges on horses which, as Bill bitterly told the potman of his favorite public house in Catford, should have been going round the streets on a cat's-meat man's barrow instead of losing the public's money. The potman intelligently agreed, and uttered dark and cryptic remarks about owners and trainers who worked "jobs," and demanded to know what the Jockey Club was doing about it. As Bill could not tell him, the matter was left undecided.

Bill drank moodily, and thought hard. He had come into the possession of stupendous wealth and a mighty secret, and sheer terror prevented him

from turning either to his own advantage.

As the evening wore on, he became a little communicative and vocally despondent. To the young lady behind the bar he said: "If I had my rights I'd be a rich man. I'm a fellow that knows things."

"Oh, yes?" She was a pretty girl with a fine gift for sarcasm. "I've had some of your knowledge, Mr. Helston. You told me to back Gray Lady in the two-thirty yesterday. It cost me five shillings."

"Do it the next time out," said Bill. "They pulled her to get a price."

"They ought to pull you," she said.

Bill murmured: "Heaven forbid." For "pulling a man" had a direct significance to him. He left the public house and walked home.

The old woman who looked after him had long since finished her duties and returned to her own place. Bill's little house, one of a long terrace of little houses, was dark and gloomy. Bill sighed. He felt in need of human companionship. He felt that the hand of every man—particularly of Richardson—was against him. As he fumbled for his door key he pondered on Richardson and wondered why such people were allowed to exist. They seemed to have no more useful place in the earth's affairs than king cobras, tigers, and any other destructive creatures that Bill happened to think of at the moment.

"I'll bet," he muttered to himself, "that Richardson's got streets and streets of houses, all made out of graft. I know him. I've got a line on him."

He pushed back the street door and fell into the house, picked himself up and felt along the wall until he reached the door of the little front room.

There was no electric light in the

house, and some minutes elapsed before Bill struck a match and applied it to the gas pendant in the centre of the ceiling.

With the light sizzling and flaring, he looked round.

Doing this he was sobered, as though suddenly immersed in a bath of icy water.

The room had been ruthlessly searched. It looked as though a lunatic had gone destructively through it.

The little sideboard doors were wide open, the drawers above these doors pulled out and emptied. Pictures had been taken off the walls. The upholstery of the furniture had been slashed. The square of carpet on the floor had been dragged from under the table legs and the chairs and rolled up to one side so that the floorboards were available for inspection. Not a thing had been left untouched.

Bill saw all this at a glance. With a little cry he went hurrying through the house, into the room behind the front room, into the kitchen and scullery, up to the three small bedrooms.

The whole house had been treated in like fashion. The searching had been literally ferocious in its thoroughness and its disregard for Bill's property. If anything had been hidden in the house or in the furniture, it must have been discovered.

Bill came down again to the front room. He was white and breathing quickly. His hands shook. It was as he came into the room for the second time that he saw the little square of cardboard that was propped against the clock on the mantelshelf.

He read the typewritten words on the cardboard mechanically and with thudding heart:

'Kaa closing down. Good night
everybody. MR. BROWN.

Mr. Brown had found him. That broadcast threat through the columns of the newspapers had become a particularized menace.

Bill dropped into a chair and stared at the card. What a fool he had been to try and burgle Drake's flat! What a fool he had been to imagine that Mr. Brown would regard him only as a casual thief, unconnected with his affairs! He should have given Mr. Brown credit for more intelligence.

Mr. Brown knew him, knew what he had done on that night Harvey Westerham was killed.

Bill read the typewritten words again. They were like a sentence of death.

He sat for a long time—for nearly an hour—holding the card, trying to think; and then that curious and likeable courage, which was one of his chief characteristics, came to his aid. Mr. Brown knew him, knew all about him. Well—he knew a great deal about Mr. Brown. No longer need he fear to try and dispose of the riches Mr. Brown had coveted, because such efforts at disposal could no further betray him. The ban was lifted from his wealth.

Mr. Brown had struck at him. He would hit back, and first he would get money. In getting it, he would, metaphorically speaking, snap his finger and thumb in the face of Mr. Brown. If it were Mr. Brown or himself—then he would fight hard. Also—and the thought came last of all—if he could secure sufficient money, do a big deal at once, he could escape from Mr. Brown altogether.

He went out of the back door of the house and stood in the darkness of the little garden for a space. It was quiet and deserted, and the fenced gardens to either side were also quiet and

deserted. Other gardens backed down on to these, the gardens of houses in the further street. Nothing moved anywhere.

Bill worked cautiously. He secured a garden fork and trod into the middle of a little patch of vegetables. There he dug for a moment or two and disclosed an old biscuit tin. He lifted the lid of this tin and from it he took one or two articles which he dropped into his pocket. He replaced the lid and forked the earth back into place.

He returned to the house. He was now moving with the deliberate air of a man who knows exactly what he is about. He stopped in the middle of the chaos which was his parlor and lit a cigarette, and after doing so he held Mr. Brown's card in the match flame and watched it until it was a black and crumpled mass which he rubbed to powder between his fingers.

He went from the house, looked up and down the street cautiously, found it deserted, and walked briskly toward the great main road.

The Lewisham Hippodrome was just emptying, and Bill mingled with the crowd that scrambled for the trams and omnibusses, boarding one of the former bound for Greenwich. He felt safe in the crowd.

The tram dropped him somewhere between Greenwich Church and Blackwall Lane, and Bill dived into a side street and stopped before the door of an unpretentious and clean little house. He rang the bell and, after waiting a few moments, found the door opened. He stepped inside and the door was closed.

"Guv'nor about?" he asked.

"He's in bed," replied the youth, who had admitted him. He was a thin lad with a face like a ferret. A cigarette dangled from one corner of his mouth.

"He'll have to get up," said Bill decisively. "I want him important. Tell him it's me."

The youth nodded toward a door. "Wait in there. I'll fetch him."

Bill seated himself in a small room furnished something like an office. The window of this room was not only curtained, but shuttered. There was a box of expensive cigarettes on the desk which stood in the middle of the floor, and Bill helped himself to one of these. He was alert, composed, a little tense.

In something less than ten minutes a man came into the room. He was a man with whom Bill had had dealings before—the biggest receiver of stolen property in Great Britain, a master organizer, whose channels for the disposal of loot stretched away across the continent of Europe, across the Atlantic to North and South America.

Bill only knew him as "Mr. Harrison." What his real name was Bill had never learned. Where he really lived Bill never knew. He was only aware that Mr. Harrison was a rich man, and that this little house in Greenwich was one of his depots. Bill felt himself fortunate to find Mr. Harrison at this address.

"What's this?" demanded Mr. Harrison. "You know you have to fix appointments with me, don't you? Are you sure you got here without being followed?"

"Certain," said Bill. He knew that he had breached Mr. Harrison's rules by this unexpected visit. He knew the whole paraphernalia of fixing appointments with Mr. Harrison—the telephone calls, the naming of a secret rendezvous, the elaborate precautions that Mr. Harrison always observed before discussing a deal.

"It's this way," added Bill. "I've done a job. It's the biggest job I've

ever done, or anybody else you know has ever done."

Mr. Harrison smiled cryptically. Thieves had talked thus to him before. "Been picking pockets?" he suggested.

Bill remained very earnest. "It's honest truth I'm telling you. I reckon I've got a quarter of a million pounds' worth of stuff if it could be sold in the open market."

He saw Mr. Harrison's expression change; and then saw a little smile in Mr. Harrison's eyes.

"A quarter of a million pounds is a lot of money, Bill. It's so much money that you can't imagine it. Who told you this fairy tale?"

"It's no fairy tale," said Bill. "You know me. You know I'm not a fool who goes busting box after box, without thinking, till the coppers get him. I only do a job now and again, and I do it properly. I haven't done one now for ten months—till this one."

Mr. Harrison looked a little more interested. "Tell me about it," he said.

Bill hesitated. "No. I can't. It was a funny job. It panned out different from what I thought. I won't tell you where I went, nor what I did. Anyhow, that's nothing to do with you, is it?"

"Isn't it?" asked Mr. Harrison quietly. "Perhaps it's a great deal to do with me. You know that I am very careful in my trading. I have to be."

"All right," said Bill, doggedly. "You'll have to be less careful this time. That's all." He knew that he dared not tell Mr. Harrison that Mr. Brown was mixed up in this matter, else Mr. Harrison might be afraid to meddle with it.

"I'm in this position," said Bill. "I want money, and I want it bad. I don't mind telling you that when I first lifted

the stuff I planned to let it go careful, so as to make as much as possible out of it."

Mr. Harrison's eyes glinted with amusement.

"But," continued Bill, "certain things have happened."

"What are they?" The question was asked quickly. "Police, after you?"

"No. Richardson pulled me in and questioned me, but he couldn't get anywhere. I had an alibi all fixed up, and Richardson's left off watching me lately. It's a private matter. That's all."

Mr. Harrison's eyes bored into Bill's face. Bill had ever been a splendid liar, and he withstood the scrutiny successfully. He knew that half a dozen obscure and "private" reasons for rapid disposal of his ill-got wealth could suggest themselves to Mr. Harrison, and he was content to let it go at that.

"All right," said Harrison, at last. "What do you want me to do?"

Bill leaned forward on the desk. He spoke in an even voice. "Can you lay your hands on twenty thousand pounds in the next few days? I want cash, and I want it in one-pound notes at that."

"Don't be a fool," said Mr. Harrison shortly. "What do you think I am?"

"I know what you are." Bill was calmly persistent. "I know you can raise twenty thousand in an hour if you want it. Now I'm offering you the deal of your life. If you handle the stuff I'm selling you properly you'll clear forty thousand for yourself out of it. You must, because then it'll have gone for a quarter of its value. I tell you, man, I'm rich. There ain't a man in London done such a job as I've done."

Mr. Harrison lit a cigarette. He was obviously impressed by Bill's earnestness, and he knew, in addition, that Bill was the most careful and cunning of men. What might be a wild fairy tale on the lips of others of Bill's kidney, was probably something near the truth when Bill spoke it.

"I'll be frank with you, Bill," he said. "I can raise twenty thousand for stuff that's worth it. I can raise it to-morrow, if need be. But I'm not going to be fooled."

He drew at his cigarette, a poised and steady man with some force about him.

"I'll be frank with you, and in being so, you're not to be insulted. This is business. If you think you're going to persuade me to turn up at an appointed place with twenty thousand pounds in cash on me, so that you can stick me up and strip me, you've got to think hard again—and then again. I'm quick with a gun, and I never travel alone, not by any means."

"Aw," said Bill. "That's talking mad. Am I a holdup man? Have I ever done any of that rough stuff? I'm a craftsman, not a thug. Here, I've brought something for you to see. I picked 'em up haphazard out of the lot I've got. They represent a little tiny bit of the stuff I can offer you. I'll take cash for 'em now. I want it, and want it bad. See? I'm being plain with you, and no double crossing."

Mr. Harrison picked up the articles which Bill tossed on to the table and turned them over in his hand. His eyes gleamed as he examined them.

He got up and walked to a smaller desk against the wall, and from this he took a small magnifying glass which he fitted into his eye socket. He held the articles under the downcast light of a small and powerful lamp.

Then he turned to Bill. His expression was strange.

He laid the articles on the table and he began to speak in a low, even voice.

Bill listened, amazed, his eyes opening wider as he listened. His hand crept out and closed on the articles, drew them toward him, dropped them into his pocket.

"Is that true?" he asked hoarsely, when Mr. Harrison had finished.

"God's truth," said Mr. Harrison.

Bill picked up his hat.

"Wait a minute, Bill," said Mr. Harrison. "Let's discuss business."

"Not a minute," grinned Bill. "The deal's off, guv'nor. I'll say good night."

He walked out to the street. He walked rapidly, excitedly, and as he walked he muttered: "Now, Mr. Bloomin' Brown—"

CHAPTER XIII

What Was in the Safe

A FEW days after Bill Helston talked with the man known as Mr. Harrison, and, in doing so, made a discovery which would have intrigued Richardson immensely and have sent Drake into something like a panic, Richardson called on Pat.

There were some signs of strain about the big detective, despite his massive healthiness, the clip in his walk. Richardson was working hard. The name of Mr. Brown was never out of his thoughts during all his waking hours, and they were many. He got sleep in short stretches, often only an hour or two in length.

He was, in fact, hot on the trail. Through the killing of Harvey Westerham he had got nearer to tracing Mr. Brown than at any time in that elusive person's career, and, having secured the

slightest of advantages, Richardson was not going to loose his grip, even for an instant.

Widespread inquiries were being made, and they would have amazed Pat in their scope. The whole tremendous machinery of the police was working from north to south, through Great Britain, and at its center point was Richardson.

The strain showed slightly in his manner toward Pat. On the other occasion when he had talked to her he had been discreetly kind, almost gentle. Now there was a certain briskness in his manner. Though he was addressing Pat, part of his thoughts were devoted to Mr. Brown and his affairs.

"There are one or two small points, Miss Revill," he said, "which I should like to discuss with you." He produced his pipe and began to fill it. "It's about that safe," he said suddenly, after a short silence. "You don't mind if I smoke my pipe, do you?"

"Not at all."

Richardson stubbed the tobacco down with his finger. He spoke slowly. "I want to recall to you what you said to me when I first talked to you, after Mr. Westerham's death."

"What did I say?" asked Pat.

"That Mr. Westerham was sitting in his study on the night you went to the dance. He complimented you, I believe, on your frock."

"That's right."

"And he said something to Mr. Drake about there being many a slip between the cup and the lip. Right?"

"Yes. They joked together."

"Hm. Am I intruding on your privacy if I ask whether Mr. Westerham particularly favored your friendship with Mr. Drake?"

Pat gave Richardson a startled look. "Why do you ask that?"

Richardson smiled. "If it's creeping into your head that I've got a wild and woolly theory that Mr. Drake murdered Mr. Westerham because he was opposed to your association with him, please don't insult my intelligence by saying so, will you? Do you feel disposed to answer my question?" Richardson's eyes were keen through the drift of his tobacco smoke.

Pat hesitated. "It's rather difficult," she said at last. "Uncle Harvey and Mr. Drake were always friendly." She looked at Richardson levelly. "I presume you are assuming that it is an understood thing that I shall marry Mr. Drake?"

"I had that in mind, Miss Revill."

"It is an understood thing," went on Pat quietly. "Uncle Harvey knew all about it, and our engagement was to be announced shortly." She stopped, looking past Richardson.

"Yes?" said Richardson gently.

"I don't know." For the first time there was a hint of weariness in Pat's tone. "There are some things which are too subtle to explain in words. You can appreciate them mentally, but not translate them into speech. One day, not long ago, Uncle Harvey asked me if I really wished to marry Jim."

"And you said that you did?"

"Of course."

"What did he say?"

"He just smiled and patted my cheek and said something about his supposing that I did. And nothing more was said."

"I see. Thanks very much for being so candid, Miss Revill. Now we'll get back to that safe. I understand from Mr. Drake that his idea is that for the time being the safe was not in use, that, in effect, the burglar wasted his time in opening it."

"Yes. But I'm sure he's wrong."

Pat spoke very earnestly. "This is a point which I can't justify by fact. But I am convinced that Uncle Harvey kept something in that safe, and that Mr. Brown was after it."

"What might it be?" asked Richardson. "Any idea?"

"I don't know. Uncle Harvey collected many valuable and beautiful things during his life. As you know, he had achieved something of a reputation as an expert on articles of vertu. There are quite a number of valuable things that might have been in there."

"Maybe." Richardson pulled at his pipe and wondered how much he might tell Pat of his own opinions. "I've got a different theory. Mr. Westerham was a collector. He came into contact with all kinds of strange people. He had a passion for collecting. Your genuine collector has."

"Oh, yes," smiled Pat. "That's right."

"Right. He was, therefore, probably often offered articles which it might have been dangerous to buy. By dangerous I mean that the person who was disposing of them had no right to sell them, no right to their possession. That has often been done. There are hidden treasures in some collections which would cause police jobs if their whereabouts became known; for your real collector finds no pleasure in displaying his wares, only in possessing them and examining them himself, in—shall I say?—basking in the sunshine of their beauty privately."

Pat's lips twitched, and Richardson grinned through his smoke. "That's very poetic for a police detective, isn't it, Miss Revill? But what I've said is right, eh?"

"Absolutely. Uncle Harvey never wanted to show people his collection. If he achieved an extraordinarily good

bargain he would delightedly exhibit his purchase to me, and then put it away. But where does all this lead?"

"In this direction. I should say that Mr. Westerham got in touch with many crooks. He must have done. He must constantly have been receiving private messages that there was available for sale such and such a priceless object—perhaps filched from this museum or that, from this private collection or that. Thus he got to know many shady characters, without being friendly with them. I think that through them he received a certain something which he put into that safe."

Pat no longer showed any inclination to smile. "You frighten me, inspector," she said. "First you talk of my marriage to Mr. Drake, and then you speak mysteriously of Uncle Harvey's collecting transactions. What exactly do you mean? What do you think was in that safe? Stolen property?"

Richardson shook his head. "No. Information, very dangerous information."

"Concerning Mr. Brown?" Pat asked the question a little breathlessly.

Richardson tapped his pipe out on the palm of his hand. "Well—yes, and no." He got up. "I must be going, Miss Revill." His eyes were kindly, a little pitying as they rested on Pat's face.

"But, inspector, what does all this mean?"

Pat's eyes were appealing. Richardson told himself that he might have conducted his inquiries a little more discreetly, and reflected grimly that everybody in the matter seemed to make mistakes save Mr. Brown himself.

He released Pat's hand and stood looking down at her.

"I was wondering," he said,

"whether Mr. Westerham kept a marriage certificate in that safe—or information regarding the marriage of a certain person. That's all."

And with that he went.

CHAPTER XIV

Frustrated Blackmail

DRAKE turned the letter over as he sat at his breakfast table. It was the morning on which Detective Inspector Richardson had his talk with Pat.

The letter was badly written by one who, ungifted in the art of calligraphy, sought to write impressively by adding many flourishes to his letters. It ran:

DEAR MR. DRAKE:

The writer of this letter wishes to see you on a very important matter immediate. It would be a good thing for you to see him, because you might wish you had afterward if you did not see him.

"Bit mixed there," smiled Drake to himself, and read on:

There is such a thing as Information. (This word was heavily underlined.) I've got it, and don't you forget it. I shall be up in the West End of London to-night at half past eight. There is a telephone box near your place, and I shall ring you up. You had better say that you can see me. I hope you are well as it leaves me at present.

A FRIEND.

A postscript completed the epistle:

Don't worry about the copper that's always watching your place. He can't hurt me, though he would like to.

Drake pondered this illuminating epistle for some time and then burned it, having decided that it was from Tommy Brook's burglar friend. This

conclusion proved to be correct, for at half past eight his telephone bell rang and the voice of Bill Helston asked if he could receive a visitor. Drake agreed.

Bill came into the flat a little hesitantly, and Drake noticed that his right hand hung in his jacket pocket. He pitched his hard round bowler hat on to a chair in the hall, and kept his eyes on Drake all the time.

"We'll talk in the dining room," said Drake curtly.

"You first," replied Bill, still watching Drake.

In the dining room, with the door shut, Drake seated himself at the table. Bill dropped into a chair opposite and his first action was to lay an automatic pistol on the table and keep his fingers round its butt.

"I've never packed a gat in my life before," he said, looking straight at Drake. "But I believe in putting my cards on the table. So there you are. This gun's got seven cartridges in it, and I used to be a dab hand with one when I was in the Tank Corps during the war."

"Thanks." Drake helped himself to whisky and soda. "Will you have a drink?"

"Not with you," said Bill. "Though your name ain't Borgeous, what I've read about. And I'll not smoke. I want to talk business. I want to do it quick. And I want a straight answer to a straight question. Otherwise—you go out."

Drake's lips were set in a thin, firm line. His eyes did not waver from Bill's face.

"What do you mean by out?" he asked.

"You hang," said Bill quietly. "Just that. And you know it."

Drake picked up his drink. His hand

was the slightest bit shaky. Drinking the whisky seemed to give him the short respite essential to the recovery of his self control, for he answered Bill as calmly as before.

"That's a serious thing to say to a man. Do you understand what you are doing?"

Bill winked. "I've had some money-making tips in my life, guv'nor, but this is the biggest I've ever had." He paused impressively and then leaned forward and said two words very slowly and distinctly. "*I know.*"

Drake did not answer him, and after staring into his eyes for a short space Bill leaned back and grinned. "D'you get me? I know. I've got you there." His left hand opened and closed slowly. His right hand never strayed from the butt of the gun. "I can put you where you won't like it by lifting my little finger. But I don't want to."

"That's good of you. Why are you so considerate of my welfare?"

"Because you're a gilt-edged investment to me. I want money, and quick—and a lot."

"Blackmail, eh?" breathed Drake.

"If you like." Bill's expression changed slightly at the word, and his temporary ferocity gave way to something like his old manner. "I've never put the black on anybody before. I don't like it, and I wouldn't do it. But I'm forced to. You know the position I'm in. I've got stuff I dare not sell. I'm in danger."

"Very great danger," smiled Drake.

"Not from you any longer," snapped Bill. "Oh, no. That's all off now. Don't you see that I can do what I like with you? You just think it out. I don't want to start explaining everything that you and me understand. I don't want to tell you exactly what you've done. You know that as well

as I do. I don't want to start standing on my hind legs and shouting off the roof tops who killed Harvey Westersham. All I want is money, and money I'm going to have. One lot only. Blackmail's not my line. Just one decent dab, safety, and I'm through."

"You're sure of the safety?" asked Drake.

"Absolutely," nodded Bill. "I took a risk coming here. I don't mind admitting that. But I'm not coming again. I'm through with risks. As I've said, I'm no blackmailer, and I don't call this blackmail. I'm just saving my own life and getting what I worked for. That's all."

Drake wanted to discover how much Bill knew. The man's air of confidence was very impressive, and Drake realized that Bill had made a very important discovery in some way or other, a discovery which was likely to be fraught with dreadful consequences.

"What have you found out?" he asked.

Bill did not instantly reply. Then he said: "I went to a big fence the other night. There. That's all I'll tell you. A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse, I reckon."

Drake whistled softly. "Fence is a receiver of stolen property?" he observed.

Bill chuckled. "You will have your joke, won't you? But do you understand me?"

"Very well," replied Drake. "You need explain no further."

He got up and walked about the room. Bill sat and watched him closely.

At last Drake said: "Suppose I refuse to listen to your proposals?"

"I shall let you have what's coming to you. Richardson would give his left hand to know what I know."

"Theory only," said Drake evenly.

"You've learned something and you've theorized on it. I can quite follow your theory without your telling me; but I would remind you that it is only theory."

"It's good enough for me," said Bill doggedly. "And it would be good enough for Richardson. You know it would," he added in a louder voice. "So don't start bluffing, and don't you come any funny stuff, because I'm more serious to-night than ever I've been in my life, and this gun might go off."

"How much do you want, and what is the bargain?" asked Drake.

"Twenty thousand pounds."

"For what?"

"Keeping my mouth shut."

"Nothing else?"

"No. I keep what I've got."

"Suppose I told you that I can't give you twenty thousand pounds?"

"I'd say you was a liar," said Bill calmly.

"Thanks." Drake resumed his parade of the room. Bill sat and watched him as before.

Drake turned and resumed the conversation after another brief interval. "I'm going to raise you," he said decisively.

"Eh?"

Drake smiled. "We're playing a little game of poker, you and I, my friend, and we're playing with the roof right off. You've made all the betting so far, and it looks like my turn. Now listen to me."

He walked to the edge of the table and leaned on it, looking down at Bill.

"You can put that gun away. It is not convenient for people to die suddenly in a man's flat, particularly if they are, as I imagine you to be, under police supervision, with the flat itself in the same predicament. You're a man

with a theory. You're also an habitual criminal."

"I'm not," said Bill. He suddenly felt slightly foolish—vaguely afraid.

"Don't talk. Listen. And do put that pistol out of sight. It's so darned silly having a thing like that about. You must have been reading boys' stories. You won't? All right."

Drake's hand suddenly moved. The gun was snatched from Bill's grasp. Bill, with a little hoarse cry, started from his chair. Drake held the gun out to him, butt foremost.

"There you are," he smiled. "The complete crook—automatic pistol and all. Although you want a silencer for it. I believe they use them. But we were talking about something else, weren't we?"

Bill's gaze was furtive. Drake's easy manner, his tremendous self-assurance, had frightened Bill. He felt that here was a man too big for him to handle.

"I've said," continued Drake, "that you've got a theory, and that you're an habitual criminal. Well—take your theory to Richardson. And when you do it remember your own record, remember how much of what you say he is willing to believe, and remember what revelations you must make in order to support that theory. That's my word to you. Now you can go."

Bill got up. He was not angry, only frightened. Drake's reply had startled him in its revelation of Drake's grasp of the situation.

"I'm off," he said heavily. "But I'm not finished yet, not by a long chalk. And don't you forget it."

Drake had preceded him to the outer door of the flat. Opening it, he turned and smiled. "Neither am I, Mr. Helston—not by a long chalk, as you put it. Good night to you."

Bill went out. Drake hurriedly put

on his hat and coat and picked up the telephone receiver. He rang up a nearby garage, and told the people there that he was coming straight round and wanted his car ready, with the engine running.

He was thinking like lightning as he hurried through the streets. Once in his car he could lose the detective officer he knew was following him. Bill Helston would probably go down to Catford by omnibus or tram, and the car would easily beat these vehicles for speed.

Bill's first impulse, on getting out of Drake's flat, was toward flight. He had gone to the interview with considerable trepidation, despite his confidence in the strength of his position, and now that that position had been revealed as possessing many weaknesses, something very akin to panic gripped him. He had a picture of Drake pouring out whisky and soda and casually asking him to join him.

That would have been an error, thought Bill, if you like—drinking with such a man, willingly becoming an accomplice in one's own murder. There was that Italian family that used to poison people wholesale. Caesar was the name of one of them. His thoughts straying, Bill gloomily wondered if that particular Borgia had given his name to the classic race at Newmarket, and wondered also if he himself would ever again see the flag drop, see the silks coming down the straight, hear the muffled drumming of hoofs on turf.

Life was rotten. Bill had set out so confidently to achieve wealth. He had looked down the long vista of the future and had seen it dotted with race cards and champagne bottles. Now there was only blackness ahead of him,

desperation at his shoulder, striding as he strode.

Suppose he told Richardson? Suppose he handed James Drake over to the law? He could do it. Of that he was sure. And yet, as Drake had said, it meant making revelations concerning himself. Richardson was not the man to sit and listen to Bill's amazing story without demanding proof of it; and in adducing that proof Bill would insure his own arrest. It was a perfectly horrible position for a man who was trying to better himself.

He descended gloomily into the depths of a tube station and booked through to New Cross. There was a young man at his side. He wore his hair rather thick, had obviously not shaved that day, and behind a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles his eyes were alight with intelligence. He was reading a book. The type was fairly large, and Bill saw that the author was obviously a Russian. He had previously had no idea that Russians wrote books. He had always considered that they drank vodka, called themselves Bolsheviks, and crucified people upside down in their spare time.

Leaning sideways, he read bits of the book. It fitted his mood. It drooped from horror to gloom, climbed back to horror and drooped back to gloom once more. There was, Bill gathered, a drunken father, an insane mother and a son who had murdered a lady he had loved too well. Life, Bill gathered, was difficult. He heartily agreed and leaned still further sideways. There was an incident with a hatchet, which he enjoyed and in which he pictured James Drake figuring as the chief victim, and a lot of talk about futility which he did not quite understand, but which he thought must be good because the hatchet part had been so sound.

The young man stirred and Bill realized that he was leaning heavily on him.

"Sorry, I'm sure," he said. "I got interested in your book. Hope you don't mind."

"That's all right," smiled the young man. "Do you like his work?"

"That chopper bit was good," said Bill. "You could almost see him hit her with it."

The young man eyed Bill strangely for a moment, and then his brow cleared. "Yes. Wonderfully impressionistic. Where do you find it in the English language? There isn't a man writing in England to-day that can compare with him. But then—all the English authors are bad. Have you read 'Cacophony' by Eidelstein?"

Bill shook his head.

The young man closed the book and enthused. "Marvelous! When you read it the first time you don't understand it. When you read it the second time it begins to dawn upon you. The third reading reveals the whole magically. Do you read much?"

"Well." Bill hesitated. "I always glance through Captain Saddle's notes each morning. Not that it's worth while. A man who tips Sleepy Lad to give Little and Good three pounds and a beating over heavy going oughtn't to be allowed to write for the papers at all. It had been raining a week when he published that stuff."

"Oh!" said the young man, in a changed voice; and opened his book again, moving ostentatiously so that Bill could not read over his shoulder.

Bill sat and mused on gloom. The train ran into New Cross and Bill got out. He walked up Amersham Road to the Lewisham High Road and boarded a tram for Catford. He had not made up his mind what to do. As the tram

thundered down Loampit Vale he looked at his watch and saw it was ten o'clock.

His luck was surely out. He had forgotten to have a drink, and now it was too late. Everything was against him. He got off the tram outside the Lewisham Hippodrome and walked sadly to his little house.

He took the gun from his pocket. What was the use of it? He had as big an aversion for firearms as any law-abiding citizen. To be caught with it meant imprisonment. It had not served him at all. Drake could have killed him with it had he chosen. Bill laughed contemptuously and tossed the weapon heavily on to the table.

He went out to the garden. His indecision was growing with every

minute that passed. He raked over the earth of the little cabbage patch and saw the biscuit tin, lifted the lid, viewed its contents moodily, and dropped the lid back into place. Then he went indoors. He would leave the tin there for a little while, at any rate. He would not respond to the fretting urge that suggested instant removal of his wealth and instant flight.

One could not run away in that fashion. Flights had to be planned. Richardson's servants were much too active and vigilant to permit of an easy escape from their observation.

Bill sighed deeply. "If things go on like this," he muttered, "I'll have to get a job."

It was an appalling thought. He took it to bed with him.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Forty Foot Tunnel at Sing Sing

A WHOLESALE jailbreak was narrowly averted at Sing Sing Prison recently by the discovery of a forty-foot tunnel leading from the mess hall to a point only four feet from the outer wall. If the prisoners had been able to continue their excavations for another week without detection they would have completed the tunnel and made a clean get-away.

Principal Keeper John Sheehy's suspicions were aroused when he noticed a broken lock on the grating that covers the entrance to a conduit for hot water pipes leading to the bath house. With two guards he investigated, and discovered the tunnel leading off from the conduit. The only clues were two hammers, two trowels and six flash lights. Although some six hundred cubic feet of earth must have been removed from the tunnel, no trace of it could be found. Prison officials were mystified and could think of no way in which such a quantity of earth could have been removed without their becoming aware of it.

It is believed these subterranean operations were pursued at odd intervals over a period of several months. Prisoners are allowed to spend their evenings in the mess hall and, while forbidden to enter the cellar, some of them managed to steal away unobserved to work on the tunnel, perhaps digging only a few inches at a time.



The Masked Man

A True Story

*Why Joe Byrd's "Patented" One-Man Gold Mine
Always Boomed Right After a Pay Roll Holdup*

By Cyrus Chapin

THE Searchlight, Nevada, stage had been successfully held up and robbed three times in one year. Each time the job had been done by a lone highwayman who worked, so the old timers said, after the fashion of Black Bart. Of course, it couldn't be Black Bart because he was long since dead. Two things stood out plainly in the bandit's work. Although the stage did not often carry much worth taking, each time he held it up there had been plenty of loot aboard. And

each time he had stopped the stage and coolly done his work where the stage-road turns the sharp angle of Lone Rock, just below the summit. By summit was meant the highest point between Nipton, on the Santa Fe, and Searchlight, a twenty-two mile drive through deep and shifting sand.

For a long time after automobiles were in use, the Searchlight stage line used horses, because of the sandy condition of the road. Four, and sometimes six horses were used, depending

on the load. When three teams were used, one was always taken off at the summit, where there was a corral, a make-shift stable, and a saloon that sold bottled beer on ice, and whisky.

The country surrounding Searchlight is typical of Nevada. A true American desert setting with cactus, greasewood, bunch grass, sagebrush and Joshua trees. Jack rabbits by the millions hopping about everywhere, cottontails, rattlesnakes and an occasional tarantula. A rolling country, edged by hills and small mountains of granite and porphyry formations. The famous Colorado River was seventeen miles southeast of Searchlight, the river marking one of the boundaries of the "Golden Triangle."

The first time the stage was held up the bandit had secured the pay roll money of the Quartette Mine. The second and third times he had been rewarded by getting away with the gold bullion of the Ajax Mining and Milling Company. Now the Ajax claimed they had kept the dates of these bullion shipments as secret as possible. Pinned down to positive statements it developed that only two of the Ajax people knew when the shipments were to be made. One, was the cashier and bookkeeper who accompanied the shipments, and the other was the president of the company, a rich man named Fuller who lived in Los Angeles. The cashier's name was Craig.

The sheriff from Pioche, who conducted what he called an investigation after each one of the three robberies, and the local constable at Searchlight, failed to find the slightest clew as to who might have committed these hold-ups. The one thing of importance the sheriff did stumble on, and which he apparently disregarded, was the fact that Craig the cashier of the Ajax Mine

had notified Fuller, his employer, when he was going to take the bullion to Nipton by stage to turn over to the American Express Company. At that time the express company had no office at Searchlight. The branch which the Santa Fe later ran into the mining camp was not yet completed.

When Pinkertons were employed on the case by Fuller, president and owner of the Ajax, I was given charge of the investigation and immediately had an interview and a plain understanding with Mr. Fuller, in his Los Angeles office.

"Under no circumstances," I warned Mr. Fuller, "must it be known by any one but yourself that a detective has been employed on the case. Not even your cashier Mr. Craig is to know this unless I find it necessary in the course of my work, to uncover my identity to him. This means no suspicion of Craig's honesty. I am going into that town as a dabbler in mining stocks and mining claims. A sort of broker. I will meet Craig and everybody else in the town, no doubt, but you will be the only person, outside of our own detective and police organization, who will know my real business—until the show down."

"How about the sheriff, Tom Furlong?" asked Fuller. "He's all right—close-mouthed and all that, and you might need him. Strikes me whoever committed these robberies got inside information from some place. I thought maybe the sheriff could help you because he knows every man here."

"No, not at the start off," I answered. "I will play a lone hand, furthermore it may be several months before I accomplish anything. And it also may be only a matter of weeks, of days, in fact. How long has it been since this last holdup?"

"It's been a little over two months," replied Fuller.

"How much time elapsed between each one of the holdups?"

"Approximately four months," said Fuller after thinking. "Another thing I forgot to tell you is that he did not rob the passengers. Each time it seems he was only after the big money. And each time the stage was brought to a standstill just as it wheeled around Lone Rock. The man stepped quietly out from behind the rock, with a rifle which he held directly at the stage driver. There was no sign of a horse, though he must have had one hidden some place back of the road."

I knew the rest of the story. Each time the holdup had simply said "Hands up! Now hand over the Ajax pay roll, and make it quick!"

After the stage driver's hands were in the air, he had made him climb down off the stage. Meanwhile he told the passengers to hold their hands in the air and sit quietly.

The stage driver was certain the same man had done all three jobs. He could give but a poor description of him. His face had been entirely covered by a black mask, except for two small slits for the eyes. He judged him to be about five feet ten and thinly built. He wore clothes that might be found on a thousand men in southern Nevada. He might have been a cow-puncher, or a miner—more likely a cow-puncher the stage driver thought.

On my arrival in Searchlight I stopped at the only hotel the place afforded for a night and a day while hunting for a boarding place where I would be more apt to meet the permanent residents of the camp. I was fortunate enough to secure room and board with Jim Ross and his wife and small family who lived in a cabin one

block north of the single business street of the town. Ross was a shift boss in the Quartette Mine and worked a day shift.

The main street of the town ran east and west and besides the hotel, post office and two general stores, contained eight saloons which were also dance halls after nightfall. Gambling, consisting principally of roulette, black jack and dice games, was carried on extensively in all the saloons. Only one of these places, called the Bullfrog, had "professional" music, consisting of a pianist and violin player. The "district" where the frailer sisterhood lived and entertained was on a hill south of the main street a few hundred yards. The girls were not allowed in the saloons until after dark when they came down from the hill in droves and danced and drank with the miners.

There were three paying mines in the district, including the Ajax and Quartette, and several mining ventures in process of development. Small hills bordered the town on the south, north and east, while to the west was "the flat," extending for many miles. It was through this flat that the stage road ran to Nipton, twenty-two miles away on the "Salt Lake Road."

I found Jim Ross and his wife agreeable people, just gossipy and talkative enough for me to acquire all the local news I wanted. They gave me a comfortable room in the front of their cottage and through Ross I was able to get a desk room for my ostensible business of "stocks" in a real estate office next to the hotel.

There was only one method of entertainment and that was to patronize the saloons. I determined to become a mixer at once. I made the rounds of all the saloons and gambling houses and heard several references to the

stage robberies which had occurred, but gained no new information of any value to my case. I did not expect any so soon. I rented a box in the post office and while doing this had occasion to size up the postmaster, whose name was Franklin Meade. He was an obnoxious-looking individual with a cruel, sensual face and a cadaverous look about him that made one think of a vulture. He was about forty years old, with red hair and extremely large and ugly-looking hands and feet. His wife was not a bad-looking woman and ran the telephone exchange which was located a few doors down the street. The post office was next to the stage station.

It happened that the hotel, post office, general stores and everything excepting the saloons, were strung along the north side of the street and all the saloons on the south side. The camp had passed its first stage of boom and was now settling down to regular mining, and milling, several stamp mills having been established for some months.

I now had my groundwork and foundation finished and was prepared to start to work on my investigation in dead earnest. First I decided to make friends with the postmaster. Fuller, the Ajax man, had told me his cashier Craig had written him about the shipment of bullion before it had been made. There was, of course, only a possibility that the postmaster had opened a letter and passed on the information to the bandit. Had it not been for the mean physiognomy of the postmaster probably I would not have suspected him at all.

I invited him to have a drink with me, after we had finished our small business about the box. He accepted and we strolled over to the Bullfrog.

"Aim to stay here long?" inquired

the postmaster, as though preparing to satisfy an inordinate curiosity.

"That depends," I replied, "whether I can make any money and incidentally have a good time."

"Let's see," said he, "you deal in stocks and such. I've lost and made some in stocks myself. That comes pretty close to gamblin'—'tis gamblin', in fact, which brings me to the point of askin' you if you'd like to sit in at a little game of poker now and then."

I said I would be pleased to do so any time he saw fit, and from this small beginning the conversation drifted into the various branches of gambling, in which he seemed to have an almost insane interest. He appeared obsessed with the subject. It was soon evident to me that he could not be a very safe man to handle even the small amount of money that passed through the local post office. The next day I had an opportunity to mention the postmaster to Jim Ross.

"I don't like him," said Ross. "They wanted me to go on his bond when he was appointed. I wouldn't do it and he has no use for me. He is always gambling, which is his own business, but shouldn't be practised when he's handling government money."

I asked if he was successful with his gambling.

"No," replied Ross, "that is, I've personally known of several times when he's lost heavily in Ed Beatty's place."

"How does he stand it?" I asked.

"Claims he makes money playing the San Francisco and Los Angeles stock exchanges. I doubt it. Of course, this is between you and me, but the last time the government inspectors checked up his cash he had wind of their coming and he was nervous as the devil. He was rustling around on

the quiet trying to raise cash. And that was just before the stage was held up the last time, in fact, the holdup was the night before the inspectors arrived here. All that day he was going around camp with a smile on his face and looking mighty foxy. I've never mentioned my suspicions to anybody but you, but it looks mighty queer to me."

"Do you think he held up the stage?"

"No—I know he didn't do that—couldn't have because he wouldn't have had time to make it to Lone Rock, besides he was in the post office when it happened. You see, on those night trips, the mail that has to go out on the stage is the last thing to be made up and it requires his presence in the post office. No, I know he didn't hold up any stage. He hasn't the nerve to pull a trick of that kind anyway. I think he was tipped off when the Ajax bullion was going out. He could find that out through Fuller's cashier Craig writing his boss when he was going to take the stuff into Nipton."

"Meaning he could open a letter, for instance."

"Exactly, and then tipped it off to this lone highwayman so he'd know when to stick up the stage and get the stuff."

"But why," I asked, "hasn't the Quartette pay roll money been grabbed since that first time? It would seem, since they pay off regularly every month—"

"They've been paying in checks since then," answered Ross. "That's the reason."

Naturally my questions didn't excite Ross's suspicions of me because the subjects of the three holdups was a constant and continuous topic of interest and conversation in the camp. A newcomer would naturally want to

know all about it. I was about to ask a question when Ross swung the talk around to answer it without my saying anything.

"You been around a lot," said Ross, "a heap more than I have. To-night let's you and me take a walk around the saloons. I want to point out a certain guy to you. It may be nothing but imagination, but I've got an idea he's the man who's been stickin' up the stage. You're the only one I've said this to. Tell you why I suspect him. This postmaster Franklin Meade is a great hand to know and talk and drink with everybody in camp. But he never goes near this guy I'm going to point out to you and they never exchange a word. It's funny.

"This guy's name is Joe Byrd, at least he says that's his name. He claims to have a bunch of claims over on the Colorado River close to the old Black Hawk Mine where they took out so much free milling gold years ago. He makes the talk that whenever he wants any money he goes and gets it from his claims. He says—but you get to talkin' to him your own self. He'll talk all right especially about the source of his money supply, for he's a liberal spender and plays faro whenever there's a game running. I've seen him lose four and five thousand at a time. You can talk to him to-night. It looks mysterious to me."

That night Ross pointed the man out to me and I found that he would in a general way answer the description the stage driver had given of the man who had held him up. The man had black hair and cold black eyes and a short black beard which might be described as a Vandyke that needed trimming. It was an easy matter to get into conversation with him by the usual method of asking him to have something. He

was standing by himself at the Bullfrog bar. I gave him my card which read:

ALFRED BAXTER
Mining Properties and Stocks
Searchlight, Nevada

It was natural enough that I should be interested in all kinds of mining propositions, so I could talk with him about his property without necessarily arousing his suspicions.

"I understand you've got a mighty good thing of it over there on the Colorado River," I began. "Why don't you let me form a company for you and sell stock?"

"That ain't my game," he grinned. "You see, it's thisaway, pardner. Every man to his game. Whenever I want a piece o' money I digs it out and—well, it's just like havin' a little bank all your own. When I want gold I go and dig her out. I'm a sittin' pretty, so why should I bother with the stock business?"

"Placer?" I asked. "Must be, of course, or you'd have to have a mill."

"Yeh—it's what might be called sort of a combination of a placer and a free milling proposition."

"And I suppose the Mint at San Francisco handles it for you so you don't have any bother?"

"That's the ticket, pardner," said he, "the good United States Mint—none better. These Searchlighters would like to get the ins and outs of just how I work my claims, but that's my business. I ain't lettin' anybody in on that. I ain't got to bother about assessment work nor nuthin'. You see, I got a patent."

"A patent? That's good."

"Best in the world—here she is, pardner—"

And sure enough he produced from an inside pocket a set of patent papers,

signed by the President of the United States. Also the transfer from the original holder to himself, all duly recorded.

"What do you say, pardner," proposed my companion, "let's you and me go up on the hill and see the girls?"

I agreed to this and excused myself to Ross who left and went home to his wife and family.

This "hill" business was no novelty to me, but I thought possibly the expedition might result in my getting on the good side of Joe Byrd, so he would invite me out to see his claims on the Colorado. The girls in the various cabins we visited all hailed Byrd with delight and proved him to be a good spender. I judged from the size of his roll, however, that he was getting short of cash. In fact, he soon mentioned the fact.

"She's gettin' short, Maggie," said he to a big blond girl who was trying to get him to buy champagne. "I got to be makin' another trip to Frisco quick, I see that."

"Your credit's good, Joe," cackled the blonde. "Say, Joe, why don't you do what you promised me? Said you was a goin' to take me out and see your mine and show me some raw gold—you never done no such thing. Come on, Joe—I bet you ain't got any mine."

He didn't seem to like this and came back at her with the assertion that he certainly did have a mine, and he'd show her some time whether he had or not.

"Aw, yes, Joe," put in another girl, a slim, red-headed one, "you promised me the same thing. Come on, let us four go out, you and your friend, and me and Sadie—let's go to-morrow mornin'—by Gawd, you gotta do it, Joe—else we'll know you been lyin'—you been stallin'—"

"All right," said Joe finally, feeling himself shoved to the wall because of past promises when he probably was under the influence of liquor. "Us four will beat it out there to-morrow mornin'. I ain't got but one cayuse, the one I'm ridin'. How you folks gonna—"

I suggested that he start early on his horse and I would follow with the two girls in a flivver, which I could rent for the purpose from somebody in the camp. This was agreeable to all concerned, so after a few more drinks, which I paid for, the party broke up for the evening.

The next morning, I secured an old Ford, picked up the two girls at the early hour of ten and circled around onto an old road, which led off from the town toward the north and the Colorado River. It was a fine, clear September day and so as to cover any possible suspicion on Joe's part that I might be particularly interested in whether he actually had a mine or not, I took along a shotgun with the possibility in view of picking up a few quail. We saw no quail, but I bagged a few cottontails and gave them to the girls for a pot pie, of which Joe and I would be invited to partake later.

On our arrival we found Joe's dugout to be situated on a side hill on the north side of the river. Close to it was a tunnel, the entrance to which was closed by a heavy padlocked door. To the west of the tunnel was the old Black Hawk Mine, where the original bank of the river had been literally honey-combed with tunnels, chambers and cross-cuts where the free milling ore had been taken out as far back as 1850, and rafted down the river to the gulf and from thence to Wales for smelting.

I could find no signs of placer workings, yet it occurred to me if Joe Byrd

had anything to cover up as to just how he did his "mining" he had around and about him in this locality every chance of doing so. He might be actually mining and taking out gold in paying quantities and he might not. It would take an extensive investigation by a qualified mining expert to determine all this.

There was a barbed wire corral and a straw covered stable close to the river and out of this Joe Byrd came to welcome his visitors. He had little to show us except his two cayuses and a few chickens and his dugout, a one-roomed affair with a dirt floor and the sides walled up with a miscellaneous assortment of rock. He brought forth a big jug of whisky, and fetched a bucketful of clear, cold water from a near-by spring.

"We'll have a few shots o' this," said he, grinning, "before I let you take a peek at my mine."

The girls appeared to be enjoying the outing and could drink like pirates without it having any noticeable effect, proving the oft repeated assertion that women can outdrink men. Joe appeared to be in no hurry about showing us his mine and I wasn't going to run the risk of arousing his suspicions by mentioning it any too often.

Finally the blonde insisted on his showing us his mine, so after another drink all around he consented to do so. He led us to the tunnel opening and unlocked the door, and preceding us with a candle in each hand he led us several hundred feet. Judging from the timbering, the workings were at least ten years old. We came to a cross-cut tunnel and here we stopped while he told us to listen carefully, and we could hear the noise of running water in the distance. Sure enough we could.

"No use goin' any further," said Joe, "'cause there's some things about my mine nobody is gonna know nothin' about."

"Aw, come on, Joe," pleaded the blonde, "I thought you was goin' to show us where you got your gold from."

"I done told you already," said Joe, "that it ain't wise to do that sort o' thing. I'm tellin' you this much, though, and that is, I git my gold from that creek you hear a runnin'. Come on now, we'll go back and I'll show you some of the old Black Hawk. That looks more like a sure enough mine than this does anyway."

Accordingly he led us out into the open air again, locked the door and took us into the ancient workings of the Black Hawk. Here he pointed out the great pillars of native rock which had been left standing to support the uncertain roof formations. We then went back to his dugout and the girls seemed disappointed that he hadn't shown them any real gold.

"Aw, hell!" said Joe, tossing down his whisky, "I'll show you some of my gold." He then brought out a few small specimens of white spar flecked with gold. I had an idea that white spar did not belong to this country. I would ask Jim Ross about that.

"You girls can have these here specimens," said Joe, "and have some jeweler in Los Angeles make 'em up into hatpins or sunthin' if you want to. I don't give a damn what you do with 'em."

"You ain't mad, Joey, are you?" asked the blonde.

"Yes," snapped Joe, "because nobody will believe I got a mine when I tell 'em. I'm gonna stop talkin' 'bout it. They can believe what they please. I know I got a mine and I know I

take gold out of it whenever I want to. That's all that's necessary."

After a few more drinks, we left, Joe promising to ride to town in time to join us at the rabbit pot-pie supper which the girls would prepare for that evening.

Later when I asked Ross about the white spar he said there was no white spar in the Searchlight country. He was interested when I told him what I had seen in and around Joe Byrd's property.

"What do you think?" he asked.

I told him I didn't know what to think and that was the truth. I immediately wrote Fuller giving him instructions to have his cashier Craig mail him a letter saying he was going into Nipton on a certain date with bullion from the Ajax. I told him to have the letter sealed in the customary manner of all ordinary business envelopes, and for him, Fuller, to inspect the letter on its arrival and send me a message as though coming from a brokerage firm in Los Angeles with whom I was supposed to be doing business. This would be a telegram, and if it read, "That stock is O. K.," I would understand the letter did not show signs of having been opened. If the message read, "That stock is not O. K.," it would mean the letter showed signs of having been tampered with.

Three days later I received a wire reading, "That stock is not O. K.," signed Los Angeles Brokerage Company. I naturally knew that the letter had been opened. I took it for granted that some one in the post office at Searchlight was now aware of its contents. The letter Craig had sent to Fuller bore the statement that he, Craig, would depart for Nipton on the night of September 26, with bullion. The time had arrived when Craig must

be trusted, hence it became necessary for me to uncover myself to Craig. I rode out on horseback across the flat, appearing to casually look over certain properties in course of development. Fuller had told Craig that some time or other he would have a detective on the ground, so he was not surprised to meet me under my true colors.

"Just how," said Craig, "do you want me to play this deal? I am here to follow your instructions to the letter."

"Have you some bullion ready to take into Nipton?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, pointing to a good-sized safe in the office. "I've got four bricks in there which will total about sixty thousand dollars' worth."

"All right," said I. "Prepare those bricks in the usual manner and take them into Nipton on the night of September 26. I understand the stage leaves Searchlight at eight thirty. All you've got to do is to proceed just as you would if you didn't know anything about what is likely to occur. Act just as you did the last time. I propose to let the bandit get away with the stuff the same as usual—in case he holds up the stage, of course, which he may not do."

"Very good," answered Craig.

I had plenty of time in which to prepare my simple plan of action. I had four men on horseback. One was stationed across the Colorado River from Joe Byrd's mine, behind a rocky, copper-stained hill where there was plenty of cover. Of course there was no way of knowing that Byrd was the bandit. Anyway, the man mentioned could keep an eye on Byrd's movements from the early morning of the twenty-sixth. Another horseman was stationed half a mile south of the stage road, opposite Lone Rock, behind a

bunch of mesquite. Toward nightfall he would ride closer to the road. There was a half moon and the night would undoubtedly be clear this time of year. Another horseman would hide in a low place in the bed of a dry gravel creek, at a point about a thousand feet northwest of Lone Rock, and he also would get closer to Lone Rock as the time drew near for the stage to pass. The fourth horseman would meet the stage west of Lone Rock, on its way to Nipton, and find out what had or had not happened. He had my instructions as well as the other three. They would all understand what to do when certain things happened. To an extent it would be a case of using one's best judgment when the time came.

I knew Ross well enough by this time to take him into my confidence. He and I started out in his flivver a quarter of a mile behind the stage. It served our purpose that we must necessarily plow along slowly owing to the sand. We did not want to be too close to the stage, in fact as Lone Rock was between five and six miles from town, we would drop behind so as to be practically out of sight until the stage neared Lone Rock, when we would creep up closer to see what was pulled off.

In the stage were Craig and the bullion, two traveling salesmen and a woman who had been soliciting subscriptions to the *Los Angeles Times*. As she was of a nervous temperament, I presumed she would scream in case the bandit held up the stage. As things turned out, I was not to be disappointed.

As the stage drew close to Lone Rock I felt that everything was just as I wanted it. Ross stopped the flivver close to a turn in the road behind a hill which brought us to

within three hundred yards of Lone Rock. We crept to the top of the hill and lay there watching. Finally just before the stage reached the sharp turn at Lone Rock, we saw the figure of a man spring out from behind the rock, and almost instantly following this the stage came to a standstill. We could hear the sound of a man's voice, but could not make out the words. After this there was silence for perhaps three minutes. Then the stage started on its way again and the figure vanished behind Lone Rock. Ross and I ran back to the flivver and were soon in front of Lone Rock. Here we stopped the machine and looking around the corner of the big rock, saw a man running toward the dry gravel creek bed. Then we saw a horse and rider leave the bed of the creek and ride away to the north. The course the rider took would denote that he was making for the Colorado River, probably for Joe Byrd's mine.

I gave a couple of shrill whistles to summon two of my horsemen and as they came toward the spot I waved to them a signal which they understood. This meant they were to follow me at a distance. I did not propose that the bandit, whoever he was, should get away. Neither did I want him to know he was being followed. I wasn't yet ready for the final act in this little drama.

Jim Ross and I turned back toward town, and when we reached the road leading toward the Colorado we were going as fast as the roads and the engine would permit. The road was better when we turned off, and we were soon hitting it up at not less than forty-five miles an hour. We parked the machine behind a hill east of the road and overlooking Byrd's dugout.

Then we went on foot down the

bank of the river and, taking off our shoes and stockings, rolled up our pants and forded the shallow bed of the river to the other side. As the whole country is covered with rocks and boulders it was an easy matter to find a hiding place almost directly opposite Byrd's dugout. We knew we were away ahead of the bandit and would have some time to wait. We also knew if he changed his course and veered off to the west he would be discovered by the horseman who by this time would have learned from the stage driver that the holdup had occurred. He had his instructions and knew what to do.

Jim Ross and I smoked our pipes and waited. We had been there a trifle over an hour when we saw a light in Byrd's dugout, and heard him speaking, evidently to his horse which he had been putting in the corral for the night. We watched for upward of an hour and the light in the dugout was still burning.

"If I'm not mistaken," I said to Ross, "Byrd will have a visitor between now and midnight."

"I get you," returned Ross.

We decided we could again cross the river and get closer to the dugout without being seen. We tried this and got within a few yards of the corral, and finally found ourselves behind the straw-covered stable. From around the corner of this we had a good view of the dugout, and could see the shadow of a man's form against the window. Undoubtedly it was Joe Byrd.

About eleven o'clock we heard an auto in the distance and it soon drew up and a man made his way to the dugout. The door opened and closed and we could hear voices inside. We circled around and came close enough to the place to hear part of what was being

said. We could also hear the clicking of glasses. Curses soon followed, and the pair were evidently wrangling.

"Why should it be fifty-fifty?" a voice we knew to be Byrd's was saying. "It's me that does the work, ain't it? What the hell do you do except open a letter? No, sir. You get what I give you, and no more. You can go to hell!"

Curses followed this, and then the pair evidently began to fight. The door flew open and a figure we knew to be the postmaster fell sprawling on the ground. As he reached for his gun, Ross, at a signal from me, jumped toward him and frustrated this attempt. On the instant I was in the doorway of the dugout with my pistol drawn on Byrd, whose back was, for the moment, turned.

"Stick 'em up, old-timer!" I called.

Instantly he swung around, and as he did so his right hand reached for a pistol which was lying on the table by the lamp.

Bang!

And as my gun spoke he jerked his

crippled right hand toward him and it was dripping blood.

"Aw—hell!" growled Byrd as he sank into a chair in obedience to my signal. "I knew it would come some time. I was sartin of it. Didn't think it would come this quick, though. Well—anyways, they can't swing me for it."

He made no attempt to go against my orders. He laid his hands on the table while I put the cuffs on, and watched me when I made a rough attempt to bind up his wounded hand with my handkerchief. I stepped to the door and tossed Ross another pair of handcuffs which he placed on the wrists of Postmaster Meade.

Meade cursed and raved all the way to Searchlight. Joe Byrd was quiet, only occasionally shouting at Meade to keep his mouth shut.

The trial at Pioche was all too the quick. Joe Byrd was sentenced to twenty years in the State penitentiary. Meade received ten years, and, being an old, unhealthy rascal, he died in prison.

Gunman Now Peaceful Character

THAT gunmen do not always languish away in prison or die violent deaths at the hands of rivals or the police is demonstrated by the case of Sidna Allen, now a peaceful citizen of North Carolina. About sixteen years ago Allen was notorious as one of the Allen boys who "shot up" the Hillsville courthouse in Virginia and left a path of death and destruction in their wake.

Recently Mr. Allen was in Durham displaying pieces of woodwork made by him during his spare time in the State prison at Richmond, where he was sentenced to thirty-five years' labor for his part in the shooting affair at the courthouse. He served thirteen years of this term, being pardoned by Governor Byrd a few years ago. The present edition of Sidna Allen gives no suggestion at all of a dark, sinister, or desperate background. His appearance is that of the ordinary mortal, although his hands are roughened from toil. He is a respected farmer of the district about Durham.



"Quiet!" came the whisper. "Make a sound or move and you'll get a bullet through your brain"

The Guilt Detector

*Whether a Machine Can Spot a Crook—
or Not—A Clever Man Who Runs It Can*

By Dudley Hoys

PROFESSOR ERASMUS SKENE had been in a dreamless sleep. His awakening was quick, and yet smooth. For several seconds he lay perfectly still, mentally torpid. The opiate borderland lingered. Then, suddenly, alertness put an edge on every nerve.

His senses told him that an intruder was in the bedroom. True, he could see nothing but the pale square of the window outlined by darkness. He could hear nothing. The hush was a listening void. But it seemed to him there was too much silence, and that itself formed a menace. The quietest

nights always had a voice, and if a listener ceased to hear that voice it was because danger stilled the nameless music of existence.

Stretched on his side, he listened intently, eyes peering into the gloom. What fear he felt was not physical. As a professor of psychology, student of all emotions, he was actually considering his own present condition. But no man can face the threat of the unknown without some sort of dismay, and his brain wondered uneasily. He found himself trying to hold his breath, to stop his pulses from beating. The effort brought a penalty. He coughed.

The next moment his eyes were blinded by the beam of a torch.

"Quiet," came the whisper. "Make a sound or a movement and you'll get a bullet through your brain."

The professor kept motionless. There was no mistaking the purpose behind those words. The intruder might be nervous, but he meant what he said.

The beam of light still shone full in his eyes. It was lengthening. He could hear the intruder backing toward the door.

Sounded the tiniest rattle of the handle. The light vanished, and immediately afterward a sharp click broke the hush. The intruder had slipped outside and locked the door.

Breathing rather jerkily, the professor swung his legs to the floor and crossed to the dressing-room. He groped for the switch, found it, and at once revealed the sight he expected. The small safe was open, and his wife's emerald necklace missing.

His first instinct was to rouse the house. Then he remembered that the key to the dressing-room also fitted the bedroom door, and if he went out in silent pursuit he might catch sight of the thief. A lot of guests and servants roused from their sleep and half dazed for a while would only be a handicap.

The key in his hand, he went quietly across the bedroom. In the other corner he could hear his young wife breathing peacefully in her single bed. He inserted the duplicate key, pushed out the other, which fell with a soft thud on the mat beneath. Then he ran down the corridor.

A big window looking on to the landing below was open, and a neat circle of glass had been cut away. The stout drain pipe fixed to the wall

underneath must have offered an easy means of entrance and exit.

For a second time the professor was on the point of rousing the house. He opened his mouth as if to shout, hesitated, frowned.

"No. In the circumstances—" His dark eyes narrowed almost to slits. He spoke aloud the thought that had struck home to him several seconds before.

"The thief obviously knew where to find the necklace. Yes, yes. But as Rosemary only took it out of the bank yesterday afternoon, how could any body except the bank people, the servants, and the guests know it was here? The bank people, the servants—and the guests."

Halted there on the landing, the professor made a queer, reluctant gesture. The bank people were above reproach, of course. None of the servants had been here less than five years. But the guests—

"It's no use denying the fact. Some of them are almost strangers to me, and they're little more than that to Rosemary."

Mention of her name brought a tender, tolerant smile to his lips. People who had gaped at what they termed a hopelessly ill-matched marriage, and who prophesied disaster, had been wrong. Certainly it had seemed that a dry-as-dust professor of psychology, with no interest in the Epicurean things of life, was no mate for a young girl like Rosemary, vivid, modern, brought up in the lap of luxury by wealthy Chicago parents.

Yet the opposites suited each other. It was one of those inexplicable cases where the wiseacres had to admit defeat. The money question never caused trouble between the two. The bride's wedding present from her par-

ents, an emerald necklace reputed to have cost fifty thousand dollars, would have worried the average man by sheer contrast with his own poverty. But as money had no significance whatever to Skene, he simply beamed placidly at the gift, and forgot all about it.

Other contrasts were dismissed by the same pleasant toleration. Skene had few friends. Rosemary had hundreds, and she made hundreds more, inviting them indiscriminately to her home. Skene never objected. So long as she was happy, nothing else mattered.

But now, he realized, indiscriminate friends might be dangerous. Of the fourteen guests in the house to-night, how many could Rosemary guarantee as above reproach?

Skene shook his head gravely. As Rosemary had only taken her necklace out of the strong-box at the bank yesterday afternoon, it seemed impossible that any outside thief could have planned this robbery. But among these pleasant acquaintances of hers, staying the night, there might easily be a shady character. Simple enough to creep out in the darkness, cut the glass of this landing window as a blind, then come to their bedroom.

He began to walk back along the corridor, pondering anxiously.

"What am I to do? If I call in the police, and the theft is traced to one of the guests—no, no. Beastly scandal, horrible notoriety!" He ran fingers through his thick hair, prematurely white. "Yet I feel uncomfortably suspicious about them. I've got to be honest with myself. Callington and his wife may be all right, and Harboard, and Gray—to a certain extent I know their dossiers—but some of the others, well, I can't even recollect their

names. Rosemary has simply picked them up and invited them here in that delightfully spontaneous way of hers. Yes, yes. H'm."

Returning softly to the bedroom, he sat down and went on pondering. Presently he laughed, and his dark eyes twinkled.

"The very thing! A sure and certain test. Yes, this is where practical psychology should prove its worth. Directly after breakfast I'll stage the experiment. Will it convict one of the guests? I wonder? I wonder?"

II

WITH the peculiar detachment of his kind, a philosophic interest free of emotion, he pondered until sleep drew down its veil. He seemed to have been in bed scarcely a minute when he was aroused by a hand shaking his shoulder. He blinked open his eyes to see his wife standing above him and the morning sun streaming through the window.

"What is it, my dear?"

"We've had burglars!" she cried. "Smithson came in to say a window had been found unlatched, the glass cut, and—"

"Oh, yes, I remember. Your emerald necklace was taken."

"What!"

In his placid, gentle way, he told her of his night adventure. Her slim, oval face turned pale, and she gave a little shiver.

"My dear," she said shakily, "how awful! Suppose—"

"We won't suppose. Don't think about it. I'm not fond of the taste of bullets, and you may be sure I kept very, very still. Yes, yes."

Rosemary gulped and nodded. "But afterward—when it was safe—why didn't you rouse the house?"

He looked at her fondly. "Don't you realize, little lady, that the thief must have *known* the necklace was here? Obviously he came for that. There doesn't seem to be anything else missing. And as you only took it out of the bank yesterday, it indicates a rather unhappy inference." Without the least hint of blame for her habit of trusting casual acquaintances, he explained his theory. Rosemary listened in silence.

"Oh, I can't bear the thought of it!" she said at last. "And yet—it's possible. If one of our guests is the thief, then it's my fault. I know I'm horribly casual," she added remorsefully.

"Not a bit, dear. You're just charmingly trusting in a somewhat shady world, that's all. Yes, yes."

"But what are we going to do?"

The professor's expression changed. Rosemary knew that look. When his vague, dreamy smile vanished and his eyes took on a vivid sheen, it meant that his own beloved science of psychology held him.

"I'm going to put our guests to a psychological test—a safe and sure test. Of course, they may refuse to take part in the experiment. Then the police would have to be called in and they, you may be certain, would cross-examine everybody in the house. Yes, yes. A most unpleasant business. No, I rather think they'll agree to my proposal. Don't worry, dear. Leave things to me. I'll tell them my plan after breakfast."

Breakfast was a noisy meal. Everybody discussed the theft of the necklace and put forward theories. For once, the professor was the center of interest. They plagued him with questions about his night adventure.

"Why didn't you rouse us all?" asked Harboard, a tall dark man, who

was supposed to make a big income from daring speculation, and who had a name as a really excellent amateur musician.

"Why didn't you phone the police at once?" inquired Callington.

"Why didn't you turn out a party of us to hunt around?" This from Ranley, an attractive youngster Rosemary had met for the first time scarcely a week back.

"For a very good reason." The professor smiled at them. "I wonder if you would do me a favor? After breakfast, I should be most obliged if you would all come into my study." He glanced around the table. All seemed amused, and a few a trifle puzzled.

"Of course," came the chorus.

"What's the mystery?" asked Harboard.

"You'll know very soon. Yes, yes."

To most of them the professor's own sanctum, a large airy room decorated in green and oak, was quite new. The rows of books with strange titles, the odd pieces of apparatus, the whole atmosphere of the place had a slightly humbling effect. Outside his own sphere the professor was an amiable nonentity to these people who had no time for anything but vivacity and enjoyment. Here in his own kingdom, he seemed to be a different man. With the manner of their kind, they felt an unwilling awe for something they could not understand.

The professor shut the door, studied them gravely for a moment, and commenced.

"Now I will tell you why I did not send for the police. My wife took her necklace out of the bank strong-room yesterday afternoon. How then, did the thief know it was here? Obviously, one cannot suspect the bank people.

You may say that the thief broke in for what he could get. Possibly. But in that case, it is strange he should have taken nothing but the necklace. Apart from the bank manager, the only others who knew of its presence here were our servants—and our guests.”

There was a sudden, uncomfortable silence.

“I am in a most painful position. I hope you will realize I am feeling just as awkward as yourselves.” But I have got to face the facts. Many of you are strangers to me—and little more than slight acquaintances to my wife. If I call in the police, they will make strict inquiries about everybody. Each of you will have to undergo a very searching examination. I sympathize with you—and I trust you sympathize with me. The whole matter is highly unpleasant. Yes, yes.”

One or two of them looked indignant, but the majority were glancing at each other awkwardly.

“What about the servants?” began Harboard. “They might—”

“True. I have considered them. The point is, whether you are prepared to put up with a police examination, or whether you will help me avoid such an unwelcome proceeding by taking part in an experiment of mine—or rather, a sure test, not an experiment.”

“What do you mean?” asked Callington, and the others stared curiously.

The professor’s high forehead wrinkled. “I will try to explain in simple terms. Psychology is not an exact science—yet. But there are certain aspects of life about which we have obtained absolutely conclusive data. As some of you may know, I believe in combining theoretical and practical psychology. In my opinion, mind and matter are so inter-depen-

dent, the two cannot be studied apart from each other. This brings me nearer to my proposal. Lately, it has been proved that the most hardened criminal experiences certain nervous reactions after his crime. He may not necessarily feel regret or remorse. But he cannot get rid of one species of emotion—fear of detection.”

The professor paused, and during the tense silence he smiled reassuringly at Rosemary, who was standing, pale and distressed, with her guests.

“Fear of detection produces definite physical effects.” He stooped down, opened a deep drawer, and placed something on his desk. It was a queer looking object, rather like a spring balance. The top of it was a flat metal plate supported by a narrow shaft, and connected with it were wires and a dry battery.

“For some time now, as no doubt you are aware, it has been possible to register heartbeats and pulsebeats in the form of a chart. This instrument is even more sensitive. It actually registers the nervous reaction of a criminal fearing detection. As an alternative to examination by the police, perhaps you would let this instrument tell us the truth?”

They were all gazing at it in an awed way. Two or three of the women-folk seemed thoroughly frightened. The tension was getting on their nerves.

“Look here,” said Harboard brusquely, “it’s all very well. I’m inclined to treat the whole business as a joke. But some of the ladies here are getting a trifle hysterical. You talk about nervous reaction, but—”

The professor inclined his head courteously. “Please understand me. This instrument is infallible. I gather what you mean. Yes, yes. This is a most unpleasant business, and some of

the ladies are feeling nervous, keyed up, even frightened. That, of course, implies marked nervous reaction. We all know, for instance, that a sensitive person wrongly accused of something may blush, show signs of confusion, the commonly accepted phenomena of guilt. But the actual physical reaction, as apart from its mere appearance, is utterly different in the case of *real* guilt. The apparatus, I repeat, only registers a single phase—fear of detection. Mere innocent nervousness and confusion have no effect on it whatever. The chart-sheet remains blank.”

III

FOR several moments nobody spoke. The professor's dark eyes turned from one guest to another.

“Well,” he asked quietly, “what is it to be? Personally, I abhor the prospect of a police examination. If this instrument tells us nothing then I assure you I should not dream of allowing my guests to be troubled by any cross-examination. No. The police would have to pursue a line of inquiry that included nobody in this room. But if you refuse to assist in the test—” He made a regretful gesture. “What option have I but to let the law carry out its prying and ferreting on anybody and everybody?”

Some were smiling naturally, some were trying to smile naturally, and a few were frankly nervous.

It was Mrs. Callington who broke the hush. She gave a jerky laugh.

“Well, I'll risk the contraption, for one. What do I have to do?”

“Thank you,” said the professor. He glanced inquiringly at the others. They all nodded.

“I am very grateful. Yes, yes. Now, as to the actual procedure.

Physical reactions are more easily registered in complete darkness. These reactions, of course, are merely a species of vibration, and light impedes transmission. You all know how much further sound carries on a dark, still night.” He turned to Callington. “So would you mind drawing those velvet curtains? Pull them, please, to their full extent. They should completely mask the window.”

Callington obliged. A couple of seconds later they were peering through the gloom, just able to discern the apparatus on the desk, and the outline of the professor behind.

“I want you to step up one at a time,” came his voice, “and press the finger tips of the *left* hand on this metal plate for, say, two or three seconds. As you do so, please tell me your name. In this murk, I can't see much.” He drew back from the desk, and by the rustling sound he appeared to be arranging some more wires.

“Ready. Who is going to be the first brave spirit?”

“I am,” said Mrs. Callington, giggling nervously, and walked up to the desk.

“Splendid. Don't be afraid.”

A kind of eerie hush gripped the room. One by one dim figures appeared at the desk, paused a few moments, and walked away. A few whispered flippant remarks. But although it was an ordinary room, the sun shining cheerily outside, they could not shake off the sense of creepiness.

“That's the lot,” came the professor's voice at last, “except you, Rosemary.”

“You want me, too?”

“Of course,” he answered jocularly. “Who knows if you haven't stolen your own necklace to obtain the insurance money?”

Rosemary approached the desk, pressed her fingers tips on the plate.

"All right. Would somebody now please pull back the curtains?"

Harboard groped his way across the room. More than one woman gave a little sigh of relief as the sunlight poured through the window. They smiled sheepishly, and blinked under this sudden flood of brilliance.

Then, with a stern note of command, the professor rapped out an order.

"I want to see your left hands. Hold them up, please."

Fifteen hands rose.

"Good God!" gasped Harboard. And his was not the only exclamation.

Fourteen of those hands were smeared with some black stuff. The fifteenth—Ranley's—looked spotless.

Ranley stared at those soiled hands, then at his own. The color drained from his face. His eyes flicked. For a moment he appeared to be on the verge of panic. But he threw back his head and laughed shakily.

"Clever trick! All the talk about this marvelous instrument was a blind, of course. You wanted to work us up, and set a trap. So when the room was dark, you smeared some black stuff on that plate without our seeing. You thought the man with the guilty conscience would take advantage of the darkness, and only pretend to put his hand on the plate, so that the instrument wouldn't register." Ranley paused, moistening his lips. "Quite a good leg-pull. Only I guessed it, you see, and I've pulled your leg in return."

Nobody spoke. Ranley looked at that circle of set faces, at the professor. His hands made aimless movements.

Again he tried to laugh, but the sound jarred badly on the silence.

The professor got up and opened the door. "I should be obliged," he said,

"if you would leave me alone with Mr. Ranley. Yes, yes."

Very quietly the guests trooped out, glancing meaningly at each other. Rosemary was the last. She looked back at her husband in a pleading way, and he smiled gently and nodded. The door closed.

The two men stood staring at each other, Ranley defiant, the professor calm and quiet.

"That silly trick proves nothing."

The professor shrugged his shoulders. "It wouldn't convict a man in a court of law, no. But it has given *me* a convincing clew. If you will restore that necklace, then for the sake of my wife, who is no more than a delightfully trusting child, you shall go free. Yes, yes. Otherwise, I shall tell the police all about the experiment. They may find out something that lands you in prison." He took out his watch. "I give you five seconds to make up your mind."

Ranley clenched his fists, stuck out his jaw as if to give righteous denial, thought better of it.

"Damn you! Very well."

Ten minutes later, after Ranley had shown the professor where he had hidden the necklace—in a cavity under a coping stone on the wall, intending to leave it there until the hue and cry had died down, and he could leave the house openly without any risk of suspicion—Harboard and Callington were discussing the professor's trick.

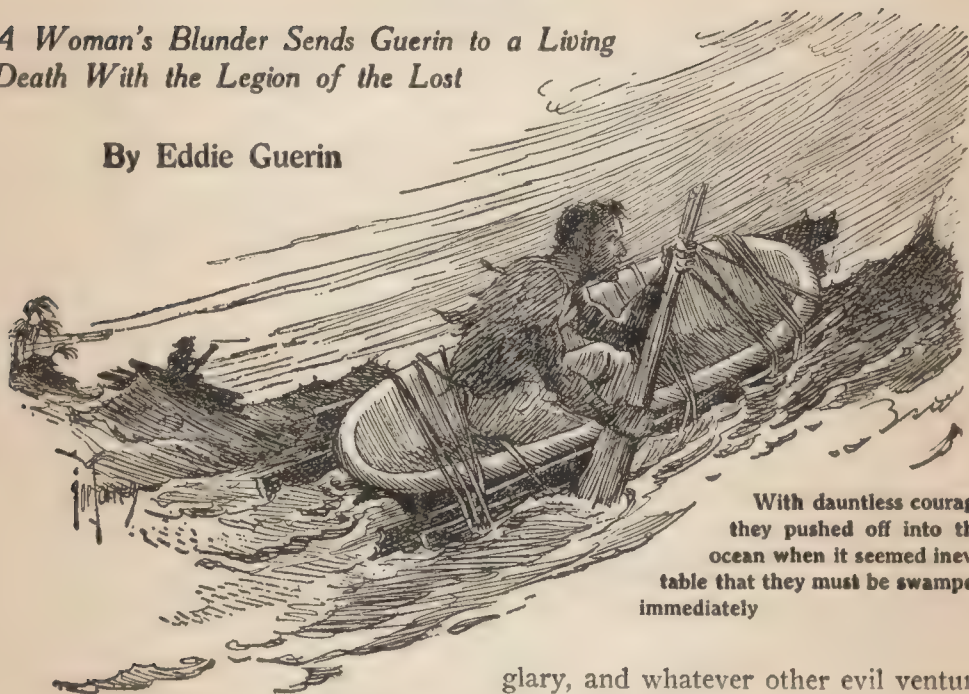
"A lovely bluff!" said Callington. "'Course, a scientist would never have been taken in by the talk about that instrument. But the professor knows human nature, all right. He sized us all up, and guessed exactly how the culprit would act. I always thought psychology was a lot of blather, but now—I take off my hat to it and bow."

I Was a Bandit

A True Story

A Woman's Blunder Sends Guerin to a Living Death With the Legion of the Lost

By Eddie Guerin



With dauntless courage they pushed off into the ocean when it seemed inevitable that they must be swamped immediately

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

EDDIE GUERIN, one time pal and later enemy of the notorious Chicago May, international crook, "King of the Underworld," fugitive from Devil's Island, has written the story of his amazing career in crime.

It is an incredible story, but every word true, backed by the police records of America, England and France.

In last week's issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY he described the beginning of that career, the years he spent in the country's prisons, the exploits in crime, confidence games, bur-

glary, and whatever other evil venture offered itself.

America finally became too hot for Eddie and he went to England. After a taste of English prisons, with Flash Billy and Dago Frank, he went to Lyons and robbed the Crédit Lyonnais, the local bank.

He and Dago Frank were later arrested in England, extradited after a long legal fight, and taken back to stand trial. They were quickly convicted.

Guerin and Dago Frank spent ten years in a French prison. After his release, Guerin tried for awhile to go straight, but finally drifted back into the old life.

He met Chicago May and formed a partnership in crime with her. One of

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for July 13

Guerin's friends warned him against her, but he paid no attention.

CHAPTER XI

The American Express Co. Robbery

ORIGINALLY May had come from Chicago, like most of us.

One way and another the old city turned out—and I mean in the most literal sense—some of the finest crooks in creation. If Chicago May wasn't exactly what I would call a good criminal she certainly knew how to batten on the blood of the men who got their living by various means outside the pale of the law. Her real name, I believe, was May Latimer, while she was also known as May Churchill—no relation of other and more distinguished families of that name.

In her thirtieth year she was undoubtedly a smart piece of goods, calculated to attract the eye of any man. As she wasn't at all backward in pressing her claims upon you she did fairly well for herself while her looks lasted.

Kid McManus and I remained together in London for some two or three months waiting the opportunity for a big smash. I meant it to be something good because while you are about it you might just as well get a few years for a job that is worth while as be caught in a paltry little theft which brings you practically nothing more than the price of a meal. The Kid thoroughly agreed with me. Irish-American by birth, safe-breaker by trade, and desperado by nature, there was nothing in the world he would not dare to do. He, also, had a lot of time behind him in America. We were what the poet calls "birds of a feather." With Chicago May as a consort I dare say we constituted a trio ripe for any mischief.

It must have been about January or February, 1901, that there arrived in London from Paris a man whom I knew slightly, a highly educated German-American known as Dutch Gus. His real name was Gustav Muller, but like most of the criminal fraternity he soon achieved the distinction of a nickname. Tall, fair, handsome, and the possessor of a refinement of manner which often made me wonder what had induced him to take to robbery, he was known to me by repute as one of the greatest dan men in the States.

From being an engineer with a first-class job in Pittsburgh he took to dynamiting safes all over the country. The thousands of little banks and post offices that were scattered all over the States used to use safes that were easy to an expert like Dutch Gus. However, the Pinkertons got him in time and Gus came over to Europe to make a fresh start.

He had been temporarily engaged purloining diamond and pearl scarf pins, rings, and any other small valuables he could pick up in a jeweler's shop. It is a trick called penny-weighting; you go in to buy something, get a few trayfuls of diamond pins and such like in front of you, and palm one or two under the eyes of the jeweler. I will give Gus his due, whatever I have to say about him afterward. He loathed such petty tricks. He, like the Kid, and me, was on the lookout for something that would keep him in affluence for a year or two.

In Paris he had found it; the offices of the American Express Company in the Rue Scribe contained a safe which might be blown open if the black caretaker could be put out of the way.

Gus, it appears, had been having letters addressed to him at the office, and from continually going into the place

he had come to be very well known. He also made friends with the negro, and the next thing to be done was to find some one to work the job with him.

I did not hear of the matter until he had talked it over with Kid McManus, asking him if he knew of a third man who might be trusted.

"There's Eddie Guerin," said the Kid. "He's all right and he can speak French. You couldn't get a better man."

Gus gave me a very close scrutiny when the three of us met. He asked me a hundred questions, told me what it would mean if we were caught, and warned me at the peril of my life to keep my mouth shut. I told him I knew all about the danger and that as far as I was concerned he could count on me to the death. So then and there we settled the deal; the three of us should do the American Express Company share and share alike.

Now, it just shows you how your good fairy may be lurking near at hand to save you from yourself. It was just about this time that I made the acquaintance of a wealthy Australian racing man who wanted to take me to the Antipodes to see a bit of the game down under. I foolishly told him I had important work to do in Paris before I could go, but nevertheless I would run down to Naples and see him there before he left on the steamer. I kept my promise to him to the extent of traveling to Naples from Paris while we were waiting to pull off the American Express job, but circumstances made it impossible for me to board the Orient liner Ortona as my Australian friend wanted. Afterward didn't I wish I had! It would have saved me a few years' suffering.

I realized, of course, the considerable risk I was running in returning to

Paris. When you have served ten years' penal servitude in a country like France, you would be well advised to give it the go-by for evermore. In my case I was not only well known to the Sûreté, and therefore liable to be arrested on sight, but also in danger because I had been deported and forbidden to return to France after serving my ten years in Rion.

Still, I never let little things like that deter me. I decided to go and to take Chicago May with me. She would be what we call a good square. If the police saw me in her company they would probably conclude I was perfectly harmless.

I told May nothing at all about the real object of the trip. Never having seen Paris, she was delighted with the idea of going, and never for one single moment suspected what I wanted her for. "Sufficient unto the day" was always May's motto. Dutch Gus didn't mind her accompanying me; I fancy he was rather sweet on her himself and probably thought he might work me out. I wish he had.

All three of us got over to Paris, traveling separately, without arousing any suspicion, and we remained doggo in the city for three weeks before we attempted to make a move. I kept under cover more than the others because mine was the greater peril. Once the police discovered I was back it would be all up as far as I was concerned. The three weeks that went by were mostly occupied in keeping observation on the American Express offices, taking turn and turn about and reporting the result of our vigil as we went back.

All the time this was going on Chicago May blissfully enjoyed herself. Neither the Kid nor Dutch Gus was inclined to trust any woman with his life and liberty, any more than he believed

in allowing a woman, whatever her character, to be mixed up in the dangerous job of dynamiting a safe. May and I were staying at an hotel near the Madeleine where they asked no questions. I took her around to all the stock sights of Paris, the Bois de Boulogne, the Louvre, even the Morgue. She never dreamed that I was just waiting.

Sentry duty continued. Night after night, with the glare of the street lamps still full upon us, we kept watch. We discovered that the negro caretaker left the offices about seven o'clock at night and went off to the cafés to drink. He would get back about half past nine or ten. In turns, Dutch Gus, the Kid and myself visited the offices almost every hour of the night, watching for anything that might undo us. We gave the place a look over at midnight, at two o'clock in the morning, at three o'clock, and at six o'clock. Not a sign could we see of any watchman patrolling the premises. Evidently what happened was that the negro went in and straight away went to bed. It seemed that nothing could possibly happen.

The clever Gus had got hold of a duplicate key of the office. It wasn't a difficult matter to get the negro out drinking one night and obtain possession of his door key just long enough to make a wax impression. The key was slipped back with the negro none the wiser.

It must have been halfway through our vigil that we were guilty of a most foolish lapse. More to while the time than anything else, but also to provide an alibi that we were American tourists, the three of us frequently went to the offices of the American banking firm Drexel & Company in the Boulevard Haussmann. Gus had the idea in his head that he might also

pick up a mug there, which only shows the stupidity of being too clever.

Our almost daily visits there, added to the fact that we never attempted to transact any business at the bank, aroused the suspicions of one of the attendants. He thought the matter so curious that on his own responsibility he telephoned to the Sûreté.

If I, for one, had known that my old friend Debischof, the self-same detective who had received me from the custody of Scotland Yard for the Crédit Lyonnais robbery, was following me about Paris at that time, I would have skinned off so quickly as to break all records in evacuating a battle line. But Debischof did his work so cleverly and so quietly that none of us suspected anything wrong. The most extraordinary part of the affair was that neither he nor any of his men was ever successful in discovering the hotels where we were staying. The reason was that we always separated when we got out into the Boulevard Haussmann and, as it happened, did not go back to our hotels. The crowded Paris streets swallowed us up, with the result that Debischof had to keep continual observation at the banking office to pick us up again. Even then he did not suspect what we were in Paris for; he must have thought we were after some of the people who had business with Drexel & Company, not an unnatural assumption in view of our past records.

As a matter of fact, Debischof would have done me a good turn had he pinched me then and there, but he was much too cunning for that. He knew there was something on the boards; what it was only time would reveal.

Everything had been planned out and to us there seemed no possibility of failure. We had even discussed

how we should make the get-away. Kid McManus said: "I'm for Italy; it's a million to one on that we shan't be able to get back to England."

Dutch Gus made up his mind to go to Marseilles and from there take a trip to Egypt.

"I'm with you," I said to the Kid. "We'll be nabbed in London for sure. Leach will soon know who's done this."

Unfortunately for me, I changed my mind—so did Dutch Gus, with results that will be disclosed later. The Kid was the only one who made up his mind and kept to it.

The time came for the job to be done. Think of it, you people who lie in your bed of a night, and ask yourself whether you would like to go out at midnight for the purpose of dynamiting a safe, a job fraught with half a dozen disastrous possibilities, in my case magnified tenfold by the fact that I had already served a long term and that I would as sure as fate get at least another ten years if the police nabbed me. It is no use saying that crime doesn't require pluck and plenty of it. *I know it does*; the man doesn't breathe who can break into a place in the early hours of the morning without feeling the qualms of fear. He may be shot dead the moment he becomes a burglar. The alarm may be given while he is inside doing the job. A dog may bark, and of all the horrible sensations any house-breaker can experience let me recommend waiting inside a house, afraid to move one way or the other, with a dog incessantly barking. Then you know what it is to die a thousand deaths. If you are wise you will get out at once and chance what happens; it is nothing short of suicide to try and silence the brute.

There was nothing particularly

elaborate about the scheme we had evolved. With the key in our possession there was little or no difficulty about getting into the building. Once inside we intended to gag and bind the negro, the Kid and I to keep guard over him and make him remain quiet while Gus blew the safe. The dynamiting was the great danger. Anything might happen. The windows might be blown out, the noise of the explosion might attract the attention of passers-by. Both Gus and the Kid were armed; if the worst came to the worst they would make a bid for life and liberty. I thought I might just as well follow suit. As time drew on it dawned upon me that we would have to be pretty lucky to get away clear.

We were certainly fortunate enough while the plans were going forward. The last time we visited the Drexel offices we were followed, entirely without our knowledge. The three of us made our way toward the Halles, McManus and I standing at the corner while Dutch Gus went into a chandler's shop to buy some rope which we intended to use in tying up the negro. The market square was crowded with people, and after Gus had left the shop the detective rushed in, showed his police card to the proprietor, and asked him what the man had bought. Rope, the detective was told.

"What for?" he asked.

"How should I know?" replied the chandler, probably disliking the police as much as we did. "To tie up a trunk, I expect."

By the time the detective had finished his questioning the three of us had disappeared, so for the moment we were safe enough.

The great night arrived. Two of us stood outside the American Express office, carefully watched the negro go

in and shut the door behind him, after which we went off, intending to return about half past one, when the streets of Paris were quieting down. I took a trip back to my hotel to see what had happened to Chicago May. That evening she was blind drunk—I had seen to that. I wanted her to be sound asleep all night long, so that if I were arrested she could truthfully declare that I had been with her at ten o'clock and had not left her all night. When I left her about a quarter to twelve she was speechless; I had no fear of her waking up for at least another eight hours.

I managed to slip out of the hotel without the concierge seeing me and went round to the rendezvous where Gus and the Kid were waiting. There we stopped until it was close on the time.

Kid McManus, who had made the key, went along and opened the door. There were very few people about. Watching him from the shadows of the other side Gus and I saw him slip in unnoticed. At intervals of five minutes we followed suit, shut the door behind us, and then looked about. Everything seemed dead quiet. Except for the noise of passing cabs there was not a sound. The bank was as silent as the grave, and but for the flickering lights of the arc lamps outside we might have been in a graveyard.

The negro blissfully sleeping upstairs received the shock of his life when the Kid and I crept into his room and seized him. He thought at first it was some of the clerks of the office playing a joke on him! "Now, then, boys," he cried, struggling to get free, "stop yo' funny business. Dis ain't no time ob de night to wak' a man up."

"If you don't keep quiet," hissed the Kid, "I'll throttle the life out of

you. This ain't no game. Shut your mouth and you'll be all right."

I have no doubt that the poor devil was petrified with fear.

"I'll sho' keep quiet, boss, if you don't hurt me," he said, quivering with fright.

I gagged him with a handkerchief, while the Kid tied his hands and feet. The two of us were masked, even if the negro could see in the dark. He must have known, of course, that we were Americans, although he afterward swore that he thought we were Germans, which only goes to show what fear will do for a man.

Dutch Gus had been waiting to see if we got the negro all right. Then he went downstairs to get his dynamite ready, leaving the Kid and me to look after the negro. It seemed ages before there came a tremendous explosion which rocked the whole building. I stopped upstairs, expecting any second to hear the police rushing in. Nothing at all happened. The Kid went downstairs and then called me to have a look. Gus had done his work so well that the safe door stood open, with only a twisted and distorted lock to tell what had occurred. Hovering over the place was the acrid, pungent smell of the dynamite. When I got down below Gus was busily shoveling out stack after stack of checks and bank notes.

Outside the day was beginning to break. We knew the staff did not get there before nine o'clock, leaving us plenty of time to divide the loot then and there. As near as we could estimate, there was between two hundred thousand dollars and two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the safe and about twenty thousand dollars in hard cash. Time was of no particular value. The explosion had gone by unheeded;

the only danger for at least three hours was the poor negro upstairs. So then and there we shared out in three equal parts, stuffing the money into our pockets and congratulating ourselves on having pulled off the job so easily.

Another hour went by. Then we opened the front door and one by one sneaked out. There were but a few people passing by. We disappeared as we had entered—at intervals of a few minutes. Kid McManus, the last man out, coolly locked the door behind him without attracting the slightest attention and went off to his hotel, while I, creeping in once more unseen by the concierge, went into my bedroom to find the fair May still sound asleep.

CHAPTER XII

Imprisonment for Life

I REALIZED that the Paris papers would be screaming the news of the robbery before long. You can't dynamite a bank safe in the heart of a big city without the story leaking out. In the beginning the French police concluded that a son of one of the officials must have had something to do with the affair. A short time previously this boy had broken into the office one night, pried open a couple of desks, and purloined a tidy little sum of money. When the actual culprit was discovered the matter was hushed up.

The police thought that our job had also been done by the same boy. However, they speedily discovered their mistake and, aided by the knowledge that Dutch Gus, Kid McManus, and myself had been acting suspiciously for some weeks past, went out hot on our trail.

When I got back to my hotel near the Madeleine in the early hours of the morning I had a fortune in my pockets.

Chicago May's peroxidized head peacefully reposed on the pillow. I was busy shaving myself when she woke up, blissfully ignorant of what had been happening.

That same morning I paid the bill and, with May in my company, moved over to the Hotel Regina in the Rue Rivoli. I carefully kept the newspapers out of May's way, and for a time at least she had no suspicion of anything wrong.

She knew I had got some money from somewhere. In a foolish burst of generosity I told her to get some dresses for herself.

"What's the matter with you all of a sudden?" she demanded. "It isn't like you to be buying dresses."

"Go on," I replied, "I don't mind. What's the use of a woman coming to Paris if she doesn't get herself some clothes?"

Anyhow, a modiste came around and showed May a few dresses, but she fastidiously declined to have them and told me I had better wait until we got back to London.

My intention was to go to Italy. I had a pretty good idea in my head that the way to London might be dangerous. We stayed at the Regina for a couple of days and, of course, the papers were full of the robbery. But May never saw them; I carefully kept them out of her way, feeling it would be quite time enough to tell her the story when we reached another country.

But one morning, when May and I had gone into a café in the Avenue de l'Opéra to have *déjeuner*, who should come in but one of the cashiers from the American Express Offices. He knew me well enough by sight because I had repeatedly changed money in the bank.

"Morning," he said. "Heard what's happened?"

I professed entire ignorance.

"Well, the bank has been robbed. There's nearly two hundred and fifty thousand dollars gone."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed shocked. "As much as that?"

"We don't know for certain yet. We're just checking off the amounts, but it won't be far short of a quarter of a million."

"Dear me! How dreadful! Have the police caught anybody yet?"

"No," said the cashier, "but they think it is a gang of Russians. They'll have them soon."

He left me, went over to another table, and ordered himself a drink. May shot a look at me.

"Oh," in a way that only a woman could say it, "so that's the reason why I haven't been able to see a paper for a couple of days!"

"Don't talk like a damned fool," I whispered to her, "and don't start shouting. I've had nothing to do with it."

I got her out of the place as soon as I could and took her for a walk into the Place de la Concorde, when I got another nasty surprise. Who should we see riding past in a cab but Dutch Gus. He pulled up and made us go and have a drink with him. Gus was in rather a vainglorious mood and anxious to show May what a hell of a fellow he was.

"Well, May," he began, "we'll be all right soon. Plenty of money for you to spend," giving her a dig in the ribs.

May, as fly as they make them, took it all in and said very little. But I could see her looking at me in a way that boded no good for me in the immediate future. However, she said

nothing at the time, and when we left Gus it was with the arrangement that we should meet in London a week later. The moment we got back to our hotel May let loose.

"Now, then, what's it all about? Where's the money? Either I get my share or else there'll be trouble."

When a man is between a she-devil and the deep blue sea it's no use hesitating. I produced what she wanted and her eyes glistened as only a woman's can when they see a big sum of money in front of them.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "so you thought you were going to do me, did you?" She picked up bundles of checks and notes and began stowing them away in various parts of her clothing. Some went down her stockings—a favorite hiding place with ladies of her profession—a lot more she secreted in her bodice. She kindly left me a bundle of French notes for my own use.

"The best thing we can do," said May, when she had secreted the money to her liking, "is to get out of here at once. We'll be nabbed for sure if we stop much longer. I'm going back to London."

I didn't care about the idea at all. Kid McManus had disappeared, and I concluded he had gone to Italy, where I also meant to go. Where Dutch Gus intended to make for first of all I didn't know. I certainly hadn't the slightest notion that he would have tried to reach England via the Gare du Nord and Calais.

The papers were still full of the robbery when May and I took our departure from Paris—as we hoped for good. We arrived at the station at the very last minute, and I don't mind confessing that I was in a devil of a funk. The first thing the police of any coun-

try do when a big *coup* has been pulled off is to watch the main exits from the city, and I had no illusions about the danger of trying to get away from Paris unrecognized.

But everything seemed to be all right. May and I sat down in the compartment anxiously watching for developments. I knew, of course, that I could be trapped in the train like a rabbit in a hole. We sat talking for some time, when suddenly I grew uneasy.

Two or three people walking by the compartment looked to have police written all over them.

"Well," I thought, "it's no good stopping here if there's anything doing."

I lighted a cigar and nonchalantly walked outside into the corridor. Two Frenchmen passed me and politely asked if there was a buffet at the end of the train. "I think so," I said. I walked on, when suddenly they grabbed me by the neck and threw me into an empty compartment, slammed the door, and forced me down on the seat.

"What's this game?" I panted.

"You will soon know," they replied.

They put a pair of handcuffs on me, drew the blinds of the compartment, and sat on either side of me until we reached Amiens. There they pulled me off the train and asked me, on reaching the police station, whether I would consent to being searched if I was as innocent as I protested.

"No, you won't search me if I can help it," I replied. "You've taken me off the train, knocked me about, and treated me like a common crook. Now, tell me what it's all about."

"You are wanted for a robbery in Paris," said one of the men. "Beyond that we can tell you nothing."

"You're making a big mistake," I

exclaimed. "I'm a British citizen and you'll hear about this."

"Ah, that will be all right, monsieur. We know who you are and we want you."

The only spark of comfort I had was that May held possession of the bulk of the money. She, wise as they make them, had heard the struggle on the train and had seen me hauled off to the police station. She didn't want me to tell her of the risk she ran.

Here was a pretty predicament! May gone with the money, Dutch Gus and Kid McManus out of sight. I resolved to keep a tight mouth; the bluff would begin as soon as I was taken back to Paris. The detectives in charge of me said very little, which made me realize that I was in grave danger. When the police ask you a lot of questions they know nothing; when they keep silent they know a lot.

I learned a few things on the return journey to Paris. Dutch Gus, like a damned fool, had gone down to the Gare du Nord to catch a train *en route* to England. Detectives watching the station recognized him as the man who had bought the rope from the chandler's shop. They at once grabbed him and took him off to the Sûreté where a little judicious questioning and the usual promise of getting him off if he would snitch induced him to tell the story from beginning to end.

Apparently Gus made no bones about giving the show away. He had told the police that Kid McManus and I had been in the job, how McManus lived in a flat near St. Thomas's Hospital in London, and that in all probability they would find him there when he returned for his clothes. As a matter of fact, they never got the Kid. He cleared out of Europe altogether and never turned up again until some years

later, when he got a seven years' stretch in Canada for blowing a safe.

But they certainly had me tight enough. I spent the night in a cell with a man outside all the time. The following morning my old acquaintance Debischof came into the cell and told me I was to go before the magistrate to be interrogated. He wanted to know whether I was going to confess.

"Confess!" I retorted. "What for? I don't know anything about it."

"Ah, ah, it is the same old Eddie," said Debischof. "What you call the American bluff, eh? We shall see."

The police court proceedings quickly demonstrated that things were pretty serious for me. The magistrate somewhat unnecessarily informed me that I had been followed from the Drexel Bank in the Boulevard Haussmann, and that I had been in the company of Dutch Gus when he bought the rope. He also added that the Chandler had identified the rope with which the caretaker of the American Express Company had been bound.

"What's all that to do with me?" I asked. "It doesn't prove I had anything to do with the robbery."

"Ah!" the *juge* exclaimed, shaking his head wisely. "We have got Dutch Gus. He has confessed that you and he were confederates."

But I never believed in being bluffed myself. They might have got Dutch Gus in custody and again they might not. Anyhow, I wasn't owning up to anything.

"Take him away," ordered the *juge*, waving his hand, "and bring in the other man."

I was put into a cell below and while there Dutch Gus, escorted by two gendarmes, passed by. I took the opportunity to call him a traitor, but he hung his head and wouldn't look at me.

Gus didn't remain long before the magistrate. Only five minutes elapsed before a couple of men opened my cell door and took me upstairs again. I saw Dutch Gus in one part of the room, while I was stood on the other side in between two gendarmes. Once more the *juge* started.

"Well, Guerin, you say you know nothing about this?"

"And I do not."

"It's no use your denying it," said the *juge* angrily. "We know all about you, and this man," pointing to Gus, "has told us you were with him."

I gave a look at Gus, but he would take no notice of me.

"He is a liar," I said. "He wants revenge because I took the woman he was after."

So it went on for another quarter of an hour, but I admitted nothing. Downstairs I went again, and eventually was taken away to a depot prison where they tried to get my photograph. I don't think they succeeded very well. They searched me, found something like a thousand francs on me, and demanded to know what I had done with my share of the money.

"I don't know what you're talking about," was my reply. "At which there was much shaking of heads and muttering of threats."

"You have given it to the woman," Debischof informed me. "Never mind, she shall be brought back here before long."

It is more than twenty-six years ago since the events I am narrating took place and I have forgotten the number of times I was brought up before the magistrate to see if I would not confess. I had been arrested on May 1, 1901, but something like nine months elapsed before I was put on trial. When the magistrate finally came to the con-

clusion that he could get nothing out of me he ordered that I should not be allowed to have any more money. I was kept in solitary confinement in La Santé Prison, idling away the time, grimly determined to confess nothing. There was always the chance of being acquitted. Some American friends of mine smuggled me in some money, and with it I managed to buy odds and ends of food, cigars, and various other things to make the life bearable. The prison authorities winked at it, hoping I would let up and tell them what they wanted to know. But I didn't intend to do that.

I had been in custody for about five or six weeks when Chicago May did something incredibly foolish for a woman of her profession. She came over to Paris to see me and put her head right into the noose by calling at La Santé to ask whether she could see me! She could not have known, of course, that the police were looking for her, or if she suspected it she might have thought that she would take the risk and do what she could for me. Possibly she may have wanted to discover whether I had snitched, and if so whether she would be safe in having anything more to do with the money. She certainly saw me, but that was about all. While she was at the prison the Sûreté was telephoned to, and May was arrested the same night. From my point of view her action was absolutely suicidal; the only evidence against me up to then was that of Dutch Gus. In all probability I would have been acquitted had May kept out of the way.

The French police found upon her evidence that the money had been put into a safe deposit in Albany Street, London. Scotland Yard got the safe opened at once, but found nothing. The

money had gone, and only May could say where. Chief Inspector Froest, of Scotland Yard, had been following May about all over England without being able to discover the whereabouts of the missing money. When she had seen me taken off the train at Amiens she had gone on to London undetected and put up at a Bloomsbury hotel, and while staying there had rented a box at the safe deposit. The watchman at the hotel said he had seen May put into her stocking a packet of checks, but from that time until Scotland Yard discovered that the checks were being put down all over London, no trace of them could be found. Three or four men engaged in getting rid of them were arrested and held on suspicion.

I will give May the benefit of the doubt and say she was drunk most of the time or she wouldn't have been so insane as to go over to Paris to see me. Her arrival in the Gay City coincided with a great drinking bout among the ex-jockeys and hangers-on who were to be found all round the cafés sponging on the people from the States. The fact that May had had a touch seemed to be no secret, and it was also generally known that the money she was throwing about came from the American Express office. The crowd following May about were all under police surveillance, and when she took it upon herself to come and see me at La Santé the Sûreté then knew for certain where she had got her money.

Also, I believe, my old friend of years gone by, Sophie Lyons, had written to the French police telling them that Chicago May was in Paris and that it might be worth their while to follow her. The only wise thing May did was to keep her address a secret from the loungers with whom she was mixing. It was only when, in a state

of maudlin generosity, she called at the prison that the Sûreté were able to pick her up.

They had no direct evidence, unless she liked to give it, that she had ever received any money from me. I continued to deny all knowledge of the matter, May also taking the same attitude. One day I was sent for by the magistrate.

"Now, then," he said to me sternly, waving a bundle of checks in front of my eyes, "here is the money you gave Chicago May."

Everybody in the room was looking at me, no doubt hoping for me to blab. They couldn't catch an old bird like me.

"I never gave her any money," I replied.

"Four people have been arrested in London passing these checks," the *juge* informed me.

"Why don't you bring them over here? They are probably the people who committed the burglary."

The months slipped by. May was shut up in the women's prison at La Rocquette, and I only saw her about three times in nine months. I felt a bit afraid, not quite knowing what she would do. Dutch Gus had already snitched, but unless May did the same I had a good fighting chance. To keep her square I got a friend outside to engage a lawyer for her, but nevertheless it was an anxious time looking forward to the day when we would be brought up at the Seine Assizes. I had retained Henri Robert, one of the greatest French lawyers of his time, and another lawyer who spoke English well. This man came to me one day and said: "What is the use of going on with the case? Why don't you plead guilty and throw yourself on the mercy of the court?"

"I'm not going to plead guilty for what I haven't done," I replied.

"Chicago May wants to plead guilty."

"She can do what she likes. They've got nothing against me except that I am supposed to have given Chicago May the money."

This was the occasion I discovered that Sophie Lyons, who was in London when May returned from Paris, and naturally came to hear that she had plenty of money, immediately informed the French police. Scotland Yard could do nothing to her while she was in England. I also found out that Sophie had written to the Sûreté. The letter was produced at my trial; it was the same sort of thing that she had done in 1888 when I was arrested for the robbery at Lyons.

And so the great day arrived. Kid McManus had got clear away. Dutch Gus and I were indicted for burglary with violence, May for receiving money knowing it to be stolen. In the usual French fashion the police reconstructed the crime; they took a safe out on the ramparts and used dynamite upon it so that they could describe the operation in full. They might have invited me to take part in the scene, but they didn't even go to the length of asking me to participate. In fact, they never apologized for putting me on trial. I wanted them to, but all I received was a contemptuous "Bah!"

A crowded court watched in breathless silence when Dutch Gus, Chicago May, and myself were put into the dock. Gus and I had a couple of gendarmes between us, while May was on the other side of Gus. The thought flashed through my mind that she was going to give me away. The negro from the American Express Company contradicted the statements he had

made when Dutch Gus and I were arrested. He had told the police in the beginning that he thought the robbers were Germans. When they showed him Gus he suddenly remembered him! When he saw me before the magistrate, who asked him: "Is that Eddie Guerin?" he promptly replied that it was. As a matter of fact, I doubt whether he had ever seen me!

On the second day of the trial there came a dramatic interlude. Dutch Gus was evidently stricken with the pangs of remorse, because I received a note he had written telling me that he was sorry for what he had done and that he had only snitched hoping to get away with a lighter sentence. He was good enough to add that if there was anything he could do to save me from a severe sentence he would do it. One of the warders saw me in possession of the note. We had a fight for it, until I was overpowered. Eventually it got into the possession of the commandant of the prison, but I succeeded in extracting from him a promise that it would be produced before it was too late.

The president of the court read the note and remarked that it was undoubtedly a message from one guilty man to another.

"Yes," I shouted back, "put a knife in his—Dutch Gus's—hand and he'll cut the throat of any one in the court."

The only defense I could put forward was that of an alibi. I went into the witness box and swore that I was at a hotel with Chicago May and had not left my room all night. I went to bed at ten o'clock and did not go out. I added that Dutch Gus had tried to implicate me in the crime owing to jealousy, and that if the court liked to have read his police record it would show that he was an old and experi-

enced bank robber who had been guilty of many similar crimes in the past. Chicago May went into the box and told exactly the same story, saying I had been in her company at the time the robbery took place and, furthermore, that I had not given her the large sum of money I was alleged to have received.

The unfortunate part of the whole affair was that Dutch Gus broke down and told everything. The copy of the indictment I had been furnished with contained all sorts of statements about English and American crooks in Paris, how Kid McManus was the man who robbed the Wagons-Lits office and got away with several thousand pounds, how the Kid and three other men had committed another big robbery at the Gare du Nord offices, embellished by all the names of the men concerned in it. There were hisses in court while these statements were being read.

Henri Robert made a passionate speech to the jury on my behalf, dramatically pointing out how terrible it was that a man should be betrayed by another so that he could escape the full consequences of his misdeeds. Chicago May's lawyer pleaded want of guilty knowledge on her behalf. The president of the court summed up, and the jury went out.

We were being taken below when I made a jump at Dutch Gus and landed him a smash on the jaw that sent him staggering down the steps. Three or four gendarmes jumped on me to prevent further mischief, but at any rate, I got the satisfaction of giving him something he would remember for a week or two.

Half an hour elapsed before we were brought back into court. I am no coward, but my heart was thumping ominously when the jury returned and de-

livered their verdict—all three of us guilty, with “extenuating circumstances” in the case of Dutch Gus.

One by one we came to the front of the dock to receive sentence—Dutch Gus and myself transportation for life, Chicago May penal servitude for five years. I more or less expected what I got, but I certainly did not think that Dutch Gus would get a lifer. In the savage satisfaction of realizing that he was to suffer the same as myself I completely forgot what it would mean to spend the remainder of my existence in a convict settlement. It was not until I had been taken back to the depot prison that night that I got the opportunity of appreciating the terrible time before me. And in this instance I think I could truthfully say that I had made the worst blunder of my misspent life. The money from the American Express office had not been in my possession for more than three or four days, and I had spent practically none of it. Yet here I was, doomed for evermore, for committing a barren crime. What I called myself in the seclusion of my solitary cell, as it finally dawned upon me what it all meant, I need not repeat. All night long the maddening refrain drummed itself into my head that I was to be a prisoner for the rest of my natural life.

CHAPTER XIII

The Isles of the Doomed

LYING off the northeast coast of South America there is a group of three islands owned by the Republic of France—the Isles du Salut. They are named Île Royale, Île St. Joseph, and Île du Diable, the last named one being the most famous of all.

The Isles du Salut are situated but a few miles off the coast of French

Guiana, and the whole colony is nothing but one vast convict settlement, sparsely inhabited by French officials and their families, French convict prisoners, and the native population of Indians. It is not a land in which any man would choose to live of his own free will. The thought that I was going there chilled my heart with a dread of I knew not what.

For three months following the time when I had been sentenced to transportation for life I lay in the solitary prison of Fresnes, on the outskirts of Paris. Some of the older prison officers who had been at Rion when I was there recognized me and commiserated with me in my plight. There was no nonsense about the discipline at Fresnes. Every time we left our cell a mask was put over our faces so that no one should know us, and each man exercised by himself.

The President of the Seine Assizes had ordered that I was to be sent to the islands straight away, but something like three months elapsed before I left France. During that time I lay at Fresnes sorting ostrich feathers, which struck me as rather a humorous occupation for a man supposed to be a desperate criminal. However, I took the work and said nothing, sufficiently thankful to have my mind occupied at all and to keep me from thinking of the dreadful years that lay ahead. I never saw a soul except the prison officials. My food was pushed in through a little door, and at a certain hour every day I could go out into the exercise yard with a mask over my face. None of the prisoners were allowed to speak to each other. With the exception of an hour's exercise each day we were locked up all the time.

The prison itself was a tremendous affair; there must have been fully a

thousand men within its walls, most of them doomed to long terms of penal servitude. We wore a sort of blue uniform with long trousers, and while we behaved ourselves we had nothing much to complain about. To all intents and purposes we were in a state of transition, awaiting the change from the light to the dark and dread of a convict's life with nothing in front of us but many years' imprisonment.

One evening toward the end of 1901—the exact time has long ago slipped out of my memory—twenty of us were taken out of the prison and put into a train. Evidently it was a pretty frequent sort of occurrence, because we were locked up in what seemed to be a gigantic Black Maria, a special carriage with cells on either side of a narrow corridor.

I had succeeded in obtaining a certain amount of information—more or less comforting—while at Fresnes. I discovered that no prisoner is sent to the islands with a sentence of less than five years. Such men are allowed to return to France. The news I got about the lifers did not sound so reassuring. For us there was no return. The only salvation we could look for was to behave ourselves for a term of twenty years when, by the grace of the commandant, we would be allowed to live on the mainland of French Guiana and drag out the remainder of our existence as convicts on parole.

As we left the prison four of us were handcuffed together. One of my companions in adversity was a lively little Apache who had been sentenced at the Seine Assizes at the same time as myself. The poor devil had been mixed up in some shooting affray in the Montmartre district, and for all I know was perfectly harmless. I would never have classed him as a hardened criminal.

During the journey to the coast I made the interesting discovery that the party included Dutch Gus, and I thought then, as I still think, that I would have cheerfully given my life to have put him out of the way. At intervals during the long run, when the train had stopped and my voice could be heard, I took the opportunity of telling him what I thought about him. All the other prisoners took it up; shouts of execration sounded throughout the carriage, and when we reached the first stopping place the warders heard the noise and took Gus out of the way. When we arrived at Marseilles we were lodged in the local jail, and there I found myself punished for what I had done. The commandant of the prison directed that I should live on bread and water for fifteen days for being a little too free with my tongue, and I did it without a murmur.

I watched every opportunity to escape, but never a chance came my way. The French prisons were not like the American; they shut you up so that you never saw anybody who could help you. I had no intention of serving my sentence if I could possibly help it, but I dare say a good many other thousands of men had gone to the islands with the same determination. The days drifted on—it is astonishing how you lose count of time in prison—until I, in company with about three hundred other men, was taken on board the *S. S. Loire*. Apparently she was engaged solely between France and French Guiana, carrying convicts, officials and their families and supplies.

From Marseilles we crossed the Mediterranean to Algiers, where we took aboard a big batch of Arabs, something like two or three hundred of them.

Life on board the *Loire* was not no-

ticeably unpleasant. The society below decks—we lived in the big holds with the hatches off all day and night—if not exactly like a Mayfair drawing-room was at least tolerable. Of course, when you find yourself thrown into the companionship of murderers, burglars, robbers of all sorts and description, forgers, and the scum of the world generally, it is no use complaining. You have made your bed and you must lie on it.

We had no work to do whatever; practically the only thing we did all day long was to sit around and play cards, gossip, tell each other the stories of our lives, and, occasionally, squabble. One hour a day we were allowed up on deck in batches of about twenty for exercise. Four guards armed with rifles kept watch over us. They didn't bother maintaining a very strict vigilance and probably would not even have troubled to look if anybody had jumped overboard.

Once clear of the Strait of Gibraltar we rarely saw a ship. The Loire plowed her lonely way across the southern Atlantic, veritably a ship of despair carrying a human cargo doomed to a living death.

I have eaten worse food. We had tinned beef—didn't it bring back memories of Chicago!—soup and bread, all of which was served to us down below. Every morning each prisoner had a loaf of bread and a tin of coffee given to him. The heat was terrific, but, strange to say, not so noticeable as on deck. In each hatch there were about a hundred prisoners sleeping in hammocks slung close together with men on guard night and day. But, generally speaking, considering the nature of their charges, they had very little to do. Fighting brought swift

reprisal in its train; there were special cells on the boat where the quarrelsome ones were locked up to stew away in savage silence until our destination was reached.

On going aboard we had been given two suits of clothes, one of linen and the other woolen, a pair of boots, a shirt and cap. You could have a sea bath below decks; it used to give the old-timers who had already served a term at the islands vast enjoyment to see the new hands lathering themselves all over with the rough soap provided and then trying to get it off with sea water.

So it went on for fifteen days, stewing, smoking, sleeping and swearing, this freight of human souls bound for the wind-swept islands where they were to toil away for many years before they could gain their liberty.

Devil's Island! It looked anything but that as I glimpsed through a port-hole and caught my first sight of my tropical home-to-be. Judging from the exclamations of delight emanating from some of the prisoners the *Île du Diable* must have appeared to them as the Garden of Eden. Dense tropical vegetation ran down to the water's edge, mango trees laden with thickly clustered fruit were to be seen everywhere, while the sparkling sea, with the islands rising sharp out of the water, gave you a vision of languorous ease too deceptive to be real.

But we did not stop at the *Île du Diable*, which is slightly to the north of St. Joseph and Royale. Instead, the Loire steamed slowly onward until we reached Royale, when the order went round to prepare for debarkation. We were instructed to put on a straw hat, linen jumpers and trousers, and to keep our hats on, whatever happened, unless we wanted sunstroke.

The dawn had come, heralded by a blood-red sun that presaged a scorching day. The six hundred men who had come from Europe were mustered on deck, counted, and then instructed to climb down to the tenders bobbing below. Convict prisoners who looked curiously at us rowed us ashore, and a crowd of soldiers in the French Colonial uniform took charge and formed us up in long lines. In the blinding sunlight, before a smartly dressed commandant sitting at a table in front of an open tent, with half a dozen armed men around him, our names were read out while the commandant asked a few questions and then sent us to the right or the left for dispatch to the different islands.

"Eddie Guerin!" he called. I answered my name.

"St. Joseph," said the commandant curtly, and I moved off to a batch with whom I subsequently found myself on the island of that name.

It took the greater part of the morning before we were finally disposed of, and I was ravenously hungry when I arrived at my destination to serve the punishment to which my foolishness had led me.

I looked around at my companions in adversity, and all my savage instincts rose to the fore as I realized that they, and the officials, represented the only people I would see for I knew not how many years to come. The thought occurred to me to jump overboard and end my life in the sea, but as I glanced over the rail of the little steamer conveying us to St. Joseph and saw the sharks swimming alongside, I changed my mind and decided to await the time when I might make a proper bid for freedom.

A great many of the prisoners were taken on to the mainland, to Cayenne,

the capital of French Guiana, others to Kourou, farther west, and the remainder to the *Commune Penitenciarie du Maroni*. There were mostly men sentenced to five, seven or ten years, and the bulk of them were boys from eighteen to twenty-five years of age!

The commandant's headquarters were at Maroni. At one time, I believe, Cayenne had been the principal convict settlement, but owing to innumerable complaints from the residents a special camp was formed at Maroni close by the river of that name which intersects French and Dutch Guiana.

St. Joseph, I found, was the biggest island of the three, although its circumference was only about three miles. All around the island ran a road made by the convicts, while in the center stood a large hill, on which was situated the seclusion prison. It was a typical tropical vegetation with thousands of coconut trees and mangoes, but practically nothing else. No vegetables grew on the island; apparently it was nothing more than some volcanic eruption heaved up from the deep in time gone by.

There was no beach such as can be seen in the small islands of the Pacific. A roughly made pier ran out into the water to allow of flat-bottomed boats landing their cargo—no steamer could have got near the place.

At the time I landed on St. Joseph, early in 1902, I found about two hundred and fifty men on the island, the majority of them engaged in building roads and blasting rock. There seemed to be no particular object in the work; it had been given to them merely to keep them occupied. Practically nothing was cultivated; rank vegetation grew wild, and when the officials were not looking some of the more agile of

the prisoners would climb the coconut trees and drink the milk from the green nuts.

There were five or six blockhouses scattered all over the island with armed men on duty. Down toward the jetty lived the guards and their families; the womenfolk of these men were the only females I saw after leaving France. Near by was the house of the official executioner, an ex-convict who had won a sort of liberty by guillotining fellow prisoners who had grown desperate and struck the men over them. But that, apparently, was a thing of the past. In days gone by prisoners accused of striking their guards, for which the penalty was death, were tried at Cayenne or Maroni and then taken to the islands for execution.

I made the acquaintance of this overseas M. de Paris. He seemed a decent sort of old fellow, a reprieved murderer condemned to drag out the remaining years of his life for a crime committed in a moment of passion. At the time I made his acquaintance he had lost his job of executioner, but was allowed to remain on St. Joseph, where he seemed to be getting a snug little sum of money cultivating a few bananas around his hut and selling fish to the prisoners.

There was a big, walled-in tank close to the jetty in which the prisoners were allowed to swim. When the tide was up it filled with water. When it went down there would be a lot of fish remaining, and this old guillotine expert, who I dare say had cut off the heads of dozens of unfortunate men, had been given the right to dispose of the fish.

He was a chatty old gentleman. He informed me that he had retired from "business" and proceeded to show me how the guillotine worked. A prisoner sentenced to death would be ex-

ecuted in the full view of the other men, so that his fate might forever be before their eyes. There would be a ceremony similar to that in England when a man is drummed out of the army.

But Nemesis overtook this cold-blooded servant of officialdom who had become quite rich selling his fish and bananas. While I was there he contracted leprosy. One day officials from the mainland visited St. Joseph and took him away, and I never heard of him again. His shack was burned down and his banana trees were destroyed, so that all the money he made did him no good in the long run.

It was a strange life. Here we were, two hundred and fifty of us, steeped to the eyes in crime, living a lonely existence on a volcanic isle, hopelessly looking forward to the future. There was work for everybody. The stone quarries claimed some, the road-making others, while I, unused to a hard, physical task and unable to do it, found myself appointed to the menial job of sweeping out the blockhouses. For a companion I had a Russian whom I had known over in England, a notorious bank robber who at one time used to patronize all the expensive cafés in the West End of London. He had already been sentenced to twenty years in the French convict settlement of New Caledonia, but after being there two or three years he succeeded in making his escape to Australia. Then he was foolish enough to go back to England, and from there to France, where he was recaptured and sent to Guiana to work out the remainder of his term.

I at once began looking round for the means of escape. The staff of thirty guards as against two hundred and fifty desperate prisoners did not appear particularly formidable. While there

was nothing to prevent a mutiny and probably the murder of the officials on the island there was little or no possibility of getting away. Only one boat ran between the three islands, and this was kept at the Île Royale. It brought the provisions, rowed by four prisoners with an armed guard in charge. I had a good look at it, but gave it up as a means of salvation. Even if I could succeed in disposing of the guard it would have been impossible to put to sea in it. All I could hope for was to sit tight and hope for something to happen.

We were not worked hard; so long as we were kept doing something the officials did not worry us. But it caused me a certain amount of petty annoyance to realize that our work did not matter; the island was not exploited to make us earn anything, but merely to keep us employed. And it was undoubtedly a healthy existence, much better than the mainland. Prisoners from Maroni, Cayenne, and Kourou, stricken with malaria fever were sent to the Île Royale, which contained a big hospital, in order to recuperate. Royale was practically a barren rock in the middle of the sea, devoid of telephonic communication and compelled to use the semaphore whenever the officials wanted to send a message. On a clear day we could see across the water for twenty or thirty miles.

At night time we were confined in the big stone blockhouses covered with roofs of corrugated iron. They were blazing hot in the day, but we never occupied them then except for the mid-day siesta when it became too warm for any work. Most of our time was spent in the open, idling at work that was nothing better than a farce. The guards leaned on their rifles, dozing, nobody had sufficient energy to lift a

hand beyond what was absolutely necessary. Those of the prisoners who had managed to smuggle in some money could always contrive to get coffee, tobacco, and other little things. It was a serious offense to be found in possession of them, but nevertheless they were regularly brought over from the mainland and found their way to the men by ways and means which need not be mentioned.

At six o'clock in the morning we turned out and went off to our work. About eleven o'clock, with the sun blazing overhead, the tasks became almost impossible. Then we were marched back to the blockhouses and kept there until two o'clock. We had our mid-day meal, lay around and wondered, as I did, how long we would be fated to continue such an existence. Very few of the men wore anything on their feet; some even discarded their linen jumpers and went about half naked, black as negroes. Some of the old-timers passed away the hours by tattooing their fellow prisoners, anything, in fact, to divert their thoughts. There were Arabs on the island, but they kept to themselves as much as possible. The Frenchmen hated them and never lost an opportunity of picking a quarrel with the poor devils.

Life for the guards could not have been much better. They lived in little houses near the quay, prisoners doing their washing and cooking. Water for the island was obtained during the rainy season and stored in huge cisterns. Every day there were tropical showers; immediately afterward the sun would shine brilliantly, enabling us to take off our wet clothing and get it dried in a few minutes. The strangest part of this strange existence was that many of the prisoners seemed to enjoy the conditions among which they

lived, but after all, they were of the peasant class who had probably been working in France for a few francs a week. Nine out of every ten of these men, I truly believe, would have declined to go back to France even if they had been given the opportunity.

To me it was a living death, toiling away day after day underneath a broiling sun with nothing on earth to live for. Sooner or later I determined to make a bid for freedom even if it cost me my life.

CHAPTER XIV

The Legion of the Lost

MORE than twenty years have come and gone since I made my escape from the convict settlement of French Guiana, but I still wonder what fate has overtaken many of the men who, like me, had been doomed to drag out the remainder of their lives in penal servitude.

There was a Frenchman named Louis Verdiez, an anarchist, or, as he would be termed to-day, Communist, who had allowed his political opinions to carry him away to the length of throwing a bomb into the Chamber of Deputies. Verdiez escaped to London, but was extradited and subsequently sentenced to transportation for life to the islands.

He did not look upon himself as a criminal at all, and I dare say, among the heterogeneous collection of murderers, burglars, forgers, bank robbers, and God only knows what else that composed the population of the island, he was fully entitled to regard himself as a political prisoner who should not have been there at all. He was certainly a man very well liked by all his comrades in adversity, veritably a cohort of the damned.

The guards both respected and feared him, and, if they had dared, would have accorded him privileges different from those of the other men. Verdiez and I came to know each other very well, and afterward, as I shall relate in the proper place, I asked him to come with me when I made my successful attempt at freedom.

Stranger still was a meeting with a man I had known in Chicago many years before, Billy O'Brien, gambler, card sharper, bank robber, anything, in fact, but an honest citizen. When the States grew a little too warm for his comfort he emigrated to Paris, the great Mecca of American crookdom. In Paris Billy must needs get mixed up in a shooting fray which cost him his liberty for evermore.

He had been rash enough to steal an Apache's demoiselle. The aggrieved lover pulled out a knife while Billy, a famous man at the draw, responded so quickly with half a dozen shots from his pistol that the rat of the underworld had no chance whatever. Billy might have got away with this little escapade in any other city but Paris. Billy was convicted of willful murder and only saved from the guillotine because his victim had first threatened him.

"I'll tell you what happened to me," he said when we came to know each other well.

"After I had been here for about three years I got them to send me to the mainland"—the *Commune Penitentiaire du Maroni*, which I have previously mentioned. "Three of us planned to get away into Dutch Guiana, but failed. When they catch you at that game you will pay for it in a way you will remember for evermore.

"I was put into a blockhouse and remained there for three months.

shackled to the wall. I had nothing to do, nothing to read. Every day they brought me my food and occasionally allowed me to wash myself. No one was allowed to communicate with me, and I was only released when the doctor came along and said that I would surely die if I were not given some sort of freedom. So I've got no intention," said Billy, "of trying to get away again. I'll live here and I'll die here. I don't suppose they will ever send me back to the States."

An attack of scurvy, terribly common among all the prisoners, had resulted in Billy being sent to the Île St. Joseph for six months to recuperate. It was like a whiff of the old days to meet a man I had known in both Chicago and New York, and for hours on end we could talk over mutual friends, speculating, maybe, as to what had become of them. Billy had a bit of a job making mats out of palm leaves, a strange occupation when you come to think of it for a man who had been one of the greatest gamblers of his time. He used to get a bit of money smuggled in from the mainland at Cayenne, but every cent of it went in playing poker of a night when the guards were out of the way.

Billy and I were so friendly that I wanted him to help me in making my escape when my plans were more fully matured. I had good friends in Chicago and London who were secretly preparing the get-away I had in mind. The time wasn't ripe when I was on the islands. I intended to wait until I could be sent to the mainland and then to make no mistake. One day, however, I saw Billy in close confabulation with Dutch Gus, and that finished me with him. When a man betrays his friends he will do anything, and as far as Dutch Gus was concerned

I was not foolish enough to harbor any delusions about his good will for me.

I would have nothing further to do with Billy O'Brien after that. I had helped him in innumerable ways, given him money which used to be brought over to me, and made his life ten times easier than it had been at Maroni. But I wouldn't stand my friends mixing with my enemies, and especially in a penal settlement where men would snitch on the slightest provocation in the hope of currying favor. Fortunately for me, Billy was soon afterward sent back to Maroni, where I believe he died. I never heard of him again.

So the dreary life in these Islands of Disenchantment dragged on. One day succeeded another with nothing to distinguish it but the weather. Terrific thunderstorms, in which the heavens would grow inky-black and then burst forth into frightening flame, followed by a downpour of rain which submerged everything within a few seconds, were the principal incidents in the enervating existence we led.

What a place to condemn a man to spend the remainder of his life! There were times when the hopelessness of the future so completely took possession of me that I felt impelled to throw myself in the sea and allow the ravenous sharks to end it all. Stuck on an island in the middle of the broad Atlantic, wearily dragging out the barren days, wondering when it would all end, waking up each morning to the knowledge that nothing could possibly happen to relieve the dreadful monotony, what wonder that a man should grow desperate and commit murder?

There was no necessity to lock up the prisoners when they had finished their work for the night. The sharks

swimming around the islands constituted a far more dangerous barrier to freedom than all the rifles of the guards.

On St. Joseph I came across all the ordinary types of men one sees in the streets of London, Paris, and New York. Clad in their convict dress of dirty white drill with their big Panama hats they all looked much of a muchness. It was only the Italians who managed to keep up their spirits. Of a night time, when there was nothing to do but lie in your hammock trying to get your tortured brain to sleep, the Italians would get together and sing songs from the grand operas halfway through the night. Volatile, never worrying, content if each day brought them the luxury of a cigarette, they were easily the happiest of all the prisoners. Most of them were murderers, but I don't think they allowed that fact to interfere with their contented frame of mind.

There were also Arabs on the islands, broken-spirited, down-trodden, as unlike the fierce Bedouin as it would be possible to imagine. The French convicts hated them like poison, and but for the restraint of the guards would have manhandled them all. I remember one day an Arab being set upon by half a dozen Frenchmen and nearly killed.

Three or four of the guards had to come to the rescue with the butt ends of their rifles before the Arab could be saved.

Every evening at sundown, as regularly as clockwork, the Arabs turned to the east and prostrated themselves, praying, no doubt, to Allah that he would release them from their sufferings. They never complained; they just did what they were told, living, possibly, in the hope that death would

put an end to an existence utterly devoid of hope.

The guards of St. Joseph, where I spent the first year of my imprisonment, were not a bad lot of fellows. Most of them were old soldiers and sailors, skilled in the use of arms, and always ready to earn a few francs from affluent prisoners. The precautions to prevent money getting into the island were never ending, but, nevertheless, men with friends outside could always get something. I had money from Chicago within three months of my arrival, and I continued to receive it practically up to the day I got away. I wrote regularly to the people in the outside world, practically as often as I liked, and was allowed to receive unlimited letters in return. Of course, everything was opened and read, but most of the prisoners were certainly permitted the indescribable boon of writing to their friends and relations. They were also allowed to have books and magazines. I had the *Illustrated London News* and the *Scientific American* sent to me as soon as my friends were apprised of my whereabouts. What the authorities didn't know was that I regularly received sums of money which I carefully hoarded for the time when my plans to escape would be reaching maturity.

For most of the time I spent on St. Joseph I kept out of serious trouble. Bitter experience of years before had drummed into me the foolishness of making myself a marked man, and so I continued to sweep out the block-houses, the paths around the commandant's house, and generally to comport myself like a well-trained domestic. I don't say that I might not have done something desperate if the opportunity to get away had been thrust under my nose. When a man is under sentence

of life imprisonment he can well be excused for contemplating even death as the only way out, and quite naturally he will be equally prepared to take life if he can thus win his way back to freedom.

But, although I saw the commandant often and frequently had a chat with him, I never looked upon his life as the gate through which freedom lay. It is a sound principle, when you are intending to defy authority to do it secretly and silently. Trumpet forth your intentions to the whole world and you ask for the trouble you will surely get. So, although I saw the commandant day by day, I merely saluted in his person the system that had made me what I was. I wanted his friendship—not his enmity. And in a way his lot was just as hard as mine. To all intents and purposes he was a prisoner, with the difference that once every four years he was permitted to go to his native land for a holiday, and also to give himself a chance of relieving the savage moroseness of nature which naturally afflicts a man penned in the company of desperate criminals ready and willing to take his life if the opportunity offered.

The same old routine went on day after day. Every other morning there came over from the Île Royale a boat which brought bread and, once a week, the other provisions required for the men on St. Joseph. We could see this boat coming, but no one was allowed on the quay in case an organized mutiny took place. Every man had his ration of bread and water served out to him in the early morning. At eleven o'clock there would be a meal of soup, preserved beef and potatoes. Green vegetables we saw none. Scurvy was rampant, not only on the mainland, but also on the islands, and all that would

be done for a man was to send him to another place for a change. The wonder was that this dreadful disease did not wipe out the whole population of French Guiana.

Our next meal would be in the evening and consisted of coffee, bread, and anything you had managed to save from the day. The old guillotineer down by the quayside sold us a bit of fruit if we had any money, and religiously abstained from giving any credit. That, with a smuggled cigarette, had to do us for the night.

Once a week there came over to St. Joseph from the Île Royale a doctor who sat with a grim face at a sort of sick parade where the malingerers and weaklings whined out their tales. It isn't necessary for me to remark that they didn't receive much sympathy. When a man voluntarily occupies a position of medical officer in a prison he is usually, to start with, a third-rater who would never succeed in civil life. And, secondly, it isn't his business to coddle convicts. I knew all this, so all the time I was on the islands I carefully abstained from "going sick."

Everybody dressed in white—commandant, guards, doctor, prisoners, and the occasional visitors we had from the mainland. The guards were clothed in the French Colonial uniform of white drill, plus a big army pistol fully loaded, with a pouch filled with extra cartridges. On top of them were other guards with rifles ready to shoot if you tried to get away by sea.

I always had a proper respect for force, but I would not have been a man worthy of the name if I had not been filled with a determination to try and make my escape sooner or later. Whatever a man may be, he wants his liberty, and I meant to get mine, who-ever died in the attempt. There were

three of us on St. Joseph—Luigi Delonda, an Italian serving a lifer, Franz Hoffman, a German burglar, and myself, who planned a scheme which for quite a time seemed very promising.

When the boat arrived from Royale there were usually left behind a number of hammocks to replace those worn out. In the tropical heat clothing rotted within a few weeks. These canvas hammocks were continually being replaced, and the three of us got the idea that if we could steal about twenty of them we could use them to make some sort of boat with which we might reach the mainland.

It was a mad scheme, but the only thing that offered itself. The idea was to make a framework out of any old pieces of wood we could find and sew the canvas around it, and then, trusting to luck, to launch ourselves in the sea and paddle ourselves across the waters to the coast of Dutch Guiana. What might have happened to us if the plan had been put into execution I shudder to think.

We succeeded in getting the materials all right and hid them in the cavities of rocks on the edge of the water. For weeks we worked on the hammocks, sewing them together, fondly hoping that the time would come when our boat would be made. We knew, of course, the fate that lay before us if we were caught. If a man happened to be serving a definite term of imprisonment he got another five years added to it. If he was a lifer, which in the islands really means life, he would probably go about night and day for six months or a year with a fourteen-pound chain riveted to his legs. There were many such men on the island. Once they had failed to get away the officials took all sorts of precautions to prevent them making another attempt.

One fine afternoon—I could not for the life of me tell the exact date—Delonda had been down at a cave working on the boat while everybody else on the island was at siesta. But as luck would have it he was seen creeping away by one of the French prisoners with whom he had already had a fight. This man carefully watched Delonda out of the way and then went on a tour of discovery which brought about disastrous results. Some of the partly sewn hammocks were discovered, and the sergeant who was brought on the scene ordered that all the prisoners should be locked up for an extra hour while the rocks were searched from top to bottom.

It was only a matter of a few hours before the whole plot came to light. The following morning Delonda and Hoffman were paraded before the commandant, where they were taxed with attempting to escape. They denied all knowledge of the matter, but some needles and stout twine found in their possession which they had been using to sew the hammocks, exactly the same as that found in the cave, quickly sealed their fate. The commandant ordered them sent to Royale, where they could be confined in a place from which escape would be a little more difficult. They were also to wear chains on their legs for six months as a reward for their ill-starred enterprise.

Somebody must have snitched on me, for I was sent to Royale too. There they assigned me as a servant in the commandant's house.

Delonda was a persistent fellow. About seven months later he and two other men conceived another plan to get away from the Île Royale.

Delonda's scheme was a mad, desperate one. For his part anything was better than doing nothing. He had

about thirty years to serve, and when he told me that he would either escape or die in the attempt I promised him my help.

"I don't think you've got a million-to-one chance," I warned him. "Still, if you've definitely made up your mind to risk it you might as well go forward."

I thought it utter madness for three men to try and launch themselves on the Atlantic Ocean, as they intended to do, in baths stolen from the officers' quarters. The intention was to obtain enough wood to float the baths and leave the rest to fate.

It was not a great deal I could do to help them. Being in and out of the commandant's house all day long I certainly had the opportunity of obtaining plenty of food. That was all Delonda and his friends wanted from me. For the better part of a week I purloined every eatable article I could lay my hands on, hid it away in the scrub, and just wondered how long it would be before they made their attempt.

When the momentous night arrived it was blowing half a gale. The baths were laboriously dragged down to the water and around them were lashed wooden scantlings torn off some of the buildings. For oars each man had a piece of wood, and it was thus perilously equipped that the three of them, with dauntless courage, pushed off into the ocean when it seemed inevitable that they must be swamped immediately.

What actually happened to them was

more or less what might have been expected. After tossing about for two days and nights on the sea they were eventually thrown up on the shore of French Guiana, exhausted, drenched from head to foot, and starving. After hiding themselves in a wood for the better part of a day they succeeded in stealing a native boat and put out to sea, once more hoping this time to reach the Dutch coast. They had not gone very far before the Indians saw them and sent information to the authorities. There was then, and probably still is, a standing reward of one louis for the recapture of an escaped prisoner.

Delonda and his two friends were caught long before they reached Dutch territory and ignominiously brought back to the islands. I remember seeing them return and saying to myself as they were dragged ashore with the chains clanking on them: "My God, what chance have I?"

There were many such of these attempts, but I never heard of one that succeeded, even when the men had managed to reach Dutch Guiana and could reasonably hope to avoid being taken. But there were even greater perils to be encountered. When I was fighting my way back to freedom, accompanied by a Belgian named Stoup, I came across the rotting skeletons of many men who had gone under in making a bid for liberty.

Their origin could be easily traced by the fact that the French penal settlement mark was still on their decayed clothing.

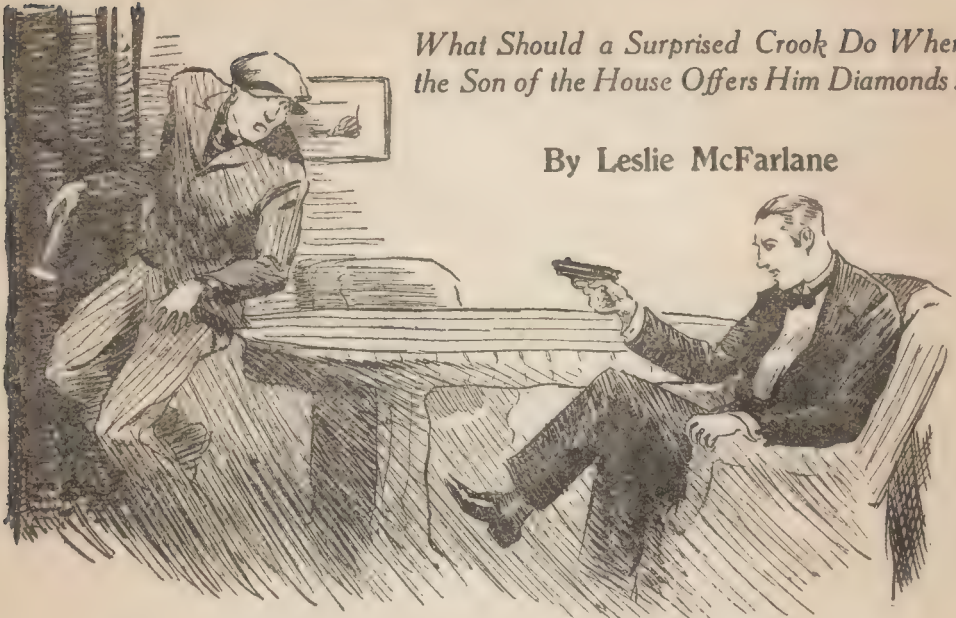
TO BE CONTINUED



Sob Stuff

What Should a Surprised Crook Do When the Son of the House Offers Him Diamonds?

By Leslie McFarlane



He whirled about just as a lazy voice drawled, "Put up your hands!"

SOBGING SLIM QUILTY lurked in the shadow of a hedge until the patrolman sauntered down the avenue. Then he scuttled across the moonlit lawn, melted into the heavy shadow of the house and commenced operations on the basement door.

It was two o'clock of a warm summer morning. The owner of the house had taken his family to the mountains for the season, advertising his absence by drawn blinds. The front and rear doors were equipped with the latest in safety locks, the windows were securely fastened, the cop on the beat had been substantially tipped to insure vigilance, and yet the basement door at the rear opened readily to a skeleton key.

In less than five minutes, Sobbing Slim was inside the house. The

cautious beam of his flash light stabbed the darkness at intervals, as he moved easily about the lower rooms. A pair of silver candlesticks, a gold mounted cigarette box and other objects of value caught his eye. He noted their positions and left them alone. There was plenty of time, and one silver candlestick would convict him just as surely as a sackful of swag if he were interrupted.

He undid the catch of a rear window, as an emergency exit, then made his way upstairs.

Moe Levin, the fence, had tipped him off to this job, and Moe got his information direct. In the master's study, on the second floor, there was a wall safe. The combination was thus and thus. And in the safe reposed a quantity of silver and jewelry. It was a soft caper. All Slim had to do was

enter the house, open the safe, extract the valuables and turn them over to Moe, with financial settlement on a percentage basis, a big share to Moe, a smaller share to Slim and a tiny share to the faithless servant.

Slim entered several rooms before he found the study. At last his flash light revealed long rows of books, huge leather-covered chairs, velvet curtains over the window. His feet sank into a deep rug.

Then the lights went on!

Every detail of the room leaped at him from the darkness. His heart skipped a beat, his nerves jumped, his blood turned to ice. He whirled about, frightened out of his wits, just as a lazy voice commanded:

"Put up your hands!"

Slim's arms went up with a jerk.

In one of the big leather chairs, not six feet away, lounged a slender young man, pointing a neat little automatic directly at Sobbing Slim. He was a good-looking chap, with clear complexion, fair hair and blue eyes; he wore a dinner coat, his shirt front shone, his patent leather shoes glistened. An immaculate young man as casual and unperturbed as though burglars were as common in his life as *débutantes*. He was very much at his ease. Slim, on the contrary, was not, his mind being troubled at the moment by prophetic reflections on the discomfort of penitentiary life.

"Well, well," said the young man in the chair, "this is indeed a surprise. I hadn't expected callers to-night."

Slim gulped.

"Come over here," invited the young man. "Perhaps you have a popgun in your pocket."

He gestured invitingly with the automatic and Slim moved reluctantly forward. The captor ran his hands

over Slim's clothes and gingerly extracted a revolver, holding it carefully by the barrel, between thumb and forefinger. He put the weapon on the table.

"Naughty, naughty," he said, reprovingly. "Don't you know the law expressly forbids these toys? As for myself," he explained, "I have a permit. I think I'll keep this gun. If a policeman found it, you might get into serious trouble. Now, the flashlight."

Slim surrendered the flashlight, placing it beside the revolver.

"Fine! Fine! Now we can talk more comfortably."

"Aw, lay off!" growled Slim. "What are you goin' to do, mister?"

The young man in the dinner coat cocked his head on one side and regarded Slim long and earnestly. Then he shrugged.

"The usual thing, I suppose. What do you think I *should* do?"

"I ain't taken anything, mister. Gimme a chance."

"A chance to take something? Well, hardly."

Slim said nothing. He was estimating his chances of edging closer and dashing the automatic from the young man's grasp, but his thoughts must have been apparent in his eyes, for the captor motioned him back.

"I wouldn't try it if I were you," he remarked easily. "It must be tiring to keep your hands elevated. Go back there and sit down."

Slim backed away and slumped heavily into a chair.

"That's better. Now, what do you want me to do with you?"

"Let me go," said Slim promptly. The other man shook his head.

"I'm afraid that's impossible. You have entered my father's house in the dead of night. Object, I presume, burglary. Object of the burglary—

the silver, and other trinkets. And evidently you know where they are hidden. Fortunately, I came to town this evening to attend a party, and more fortunately I decided to sleep here to-night, and stepped into the study for a quiet pipe before going to bed. Too bad you didn't see the light—but I forgot—those window curtains are heavy. I heard you getting in the basement, so I just turned out the lights and waited. So here we are. I could telephone to the police at once, I suppose, but as I've never met a burglar before, I'd like to improve my opportunity. What is your name?"

"Jones," muttered Slim sullenly.

"Unusual," commented the young man. "Your first name?"

"John."

"Extraordinary! John Jones. I was telling myself it would be Bill Smith. Do you ever stop to think, John, that by getting yourself into a fix like this, you are doing an injustice to thousands of innocent John Joneses? Think of the headlines in the paper to-morrow; 'John Jones Arrested!' And all the other John Joneses will be busy explaining to their friends that it was some other John Jones."

His voice was mocking. Slim scowled.

"Lay off, mister. Lay off. Call the bulls, if you're going to."

"The bulls? Ah, yes. An underworld term for our efficient constabulary, isn't it? Don't be in a hurry, Mr. Jones. The bulls will be here. All in good time."

With his free hand, he reached for a packet of cigarettes, shook two out onto the table, tossed one to Slim and placed the other between his own lips.

"I'm afraid I can't offer you a light," he apologized, as he snapped a gold lighter and ignited his cigarette,

keeping a wary eye on the captive. "You might be tempted to take advantage of the situation."

"I've got matches." Slim lit his cigarette. The captor blew a luxurious cloud of smoke.

"Why," he asked, "did you want to rob us?"

"Wasn't going to rob you."

"What were you after then?"

"Nothin'."

"What a liar you are, John! One doesn't enter a strange house at this hour of the night for nothing. What did you want?"

"Something to eat."

"Really? Are you hungry?"

Slim gulped convincingly. "Starvin'."

"Oh, that's too bad. How long since you've had anything to eat?"

"Two days."

"Terrible. Can't you get a job?"

"Mister," said Slim, with a catch in his voice, "you've got me all wrong. All wrong, see? I ain't a burglar. This is the first time I ever done anything like this in my life. I was drove to it. If you'll let me go, I'll never get in trouble again."

II

SOBGING SLIM earned his sobriquet justly.

More than once, his ability to picture himself as a child of dire misfortune, an unhappy victim of destiny, his talent for weeping real tears and sobbing genuine sobs, had served him well. He had a pronounced gift for arousing sympathy, and often this faculty, developed by several years experience in street cadging, had extricated him from difficult situations. Slim was a crook and a thief, a stool-pigeon and a snitcher, but he could improvise a heart-rending story, and

he could tell it with convincing artistry, in a tremulous voice, with a pathetic expression, eyes brimming with tears at the proper moments, his tale effectively punctuated with gulps and sobs, in a manner that would have awakened envy in the heart of any ingénue of ten-twenty-thirty melodrama.

Now he went into action.

"Mister, if you send me to jail, it'll be the first time I ever saw the inside of a cell," he said earnestly. "I never did anything like this before. But I was drove to it. I was hungry and desprit. When you ain't had anythin' to eat for two days, and when you hear your children cryin' for food—"

"Oh, you have children?"

"Three of 'em, mister. Three beautiful youngsters! My wife, she's been doing the best she could, takin' in washing, but there's going to be another baby, so she had to quit work. And I ain't been able to get a job for ten weeks. I've tried, mister—everywhere." A sob. "I've tramped the streets, lookin' for a job. Anything at all. But I couldn't get nothin'. There'd always be somebody ahead of me. For two days, my poor wife and children haven't had nothin' to eat but dry bread and water. The look in their eyes fair drove me crazy, mister. This morning the youngest one took sick."

Slim felt that this was the proper moment for lachrymose effect. His eyes filled. A big tear rolled down the side of his nose. He brushed it away with a dirty cuff, in case it had not been noticed.

"I called the doctor," he went on, recovering himself. "Had to tell him I couldn't pay him until I got work. He said—he said—the whole trouble was that the poor child ain't gettin' enough to eat.

"What could I do, mister?" asked Slim, plaintively. "Could I see my children starve to death right in front of my eyes? I went out and hunted all day for work. There was nothin'. I didn't have anything to eat. I got so weak I sat down on a bench in the park." Another sob. "A cop told me to move on. I went back home to-night but I wasn't able to bear the sight of 'em all so hungry, lookin' at me so hopefully when I came back, and me with nothing for them. So I said to myself, if I couldn't earn food, I'd take it. I'd get some food for my wife and kiddies if I had to steal it."

He blubbered dolefully.

"How about the revolver?" asked the young man.

"It—it's my service revolver, sir. I was in the war. Do you know what I was going to do with that gun, sir? I was going to shoot myself. Then I thought of how much worse off my family would be, and I didn't have the courage to do it."

"Hmm! Why did you come upstairs? The cupboard is in the kitchen."

"There was nothin' in the cupboard, mister. And when I found that out, and knowin' I was breaking the law anyway, I thought I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, so I made up my mind to take something I could sell. I'll be honest with you, mister. I intended to steal—but—it's the first time—"

At this point he broke down and wept very bitterly, indeed. He covered his face with his hands, his thin body shook. He was the picture of misery and distress.

The young man's face was not quite so stern.

"Look here, old chap, don't cry about it."

"And now," moaned Slim, "I'll be

sent to jail—and my poor wife and children—” Emotion overcame him again. Sobs choked him.

“Hang it all, I didn’t know it was as bad as that,” said the other sympathetically. “Sit up and listen to me.”

Sniffing, the victim of circumstances rubbed his eyes, swallowed another sob and his Adam’s apple, and looked dolefully at the younger man.

“See here! If this is the first time you ever did anything like this, and if things are as bad as you say, I’m certainly not the man to send you to jail.”

Hope illuminated Slim’s tear-stained face. “It—it’s the very first time, mister. Honest!”

“And the last?”

“Y-yes, sir. I’ll never do anything like this again, if you’ll only let me go. I’ll try harder than ever, mister, to find work.”

“Well, I think you are really a good fellow at heart, and I’m going to give you another chance.”

“Mister!” said Slim, very solemnly, “my wife and kiddies will bless you to their dyin’ day.”

“No, they won’t. You’re not to tell them anything about this. First of all, you must get work. You know my father—Jacob Nelson, of the Nelson Construction Company.”

“I didn’t know this was his house, mister.”

“Well, it is. Now, you go down there to-morrow and tell them I sent you. I’ll call up the superintendent in the morning, and he will give you a job.”

“Mister—I’ll be there at seven o’clock!” stammered Slim, privately resolving to keep a wide berth between himself and the Nelson Construction Company office for the rest of his days.

“All right, that’s a promise, now.”

“Oh, sir, I don’t know how to thank

you. My kiddies won’t be hungry no more.” Slim achieved a remarkable sob that expressed relief and gratitude wholly genuine. “If you could—if I may be so bold as to ask—might we name the new baby after you?”

This last, he reflected, was a touch of true artistry.

“Thank you, but don’t bother. Now, you’re broke, you say?”

“Yes, mister.”

The young man reached into his pocket and withdrew a leather wallet. He flipped it open, holding it in his left hand, then frowned.

“This is a nuisance,” he said. “I thought I had more money than that. Must have spent more than I imagined. I find I’m a bit short. Still, if two dollars would be of any use to you—”

“It would indeed, mister.”

The young man gave Slim a two-dollar bill. “There,” he said, “I’m sorry it’s not more. You’ll have to eat, until you draw your first pay. It will *have* to be more,” he reflected. “Here—I’ll tell you what I’ll do.”

He got up and strode over to the wall, drew aside a piece of tapestry and revealed the safe. Its door was partly open.

“You come along at a good time,” he laughed. “I had just opened this little strong box, so I could put away my studs and cuffbuttons.” He rummaged about, and then turned away, holding in his fingers an object that gleamed like a tiny star.

“I’m going back to the mountains to-morrow,” he said, “or I’d get you some cash. But perhaps this will help. It is rather valuable. A diamond stick-pin. The stone is quite large.”

Slim’s eyes bulged.

“Oh, mister—why it’s a fortune!”

“I dare say it’s worth fifty or a hundred dollars. I have another, so

I really have no use for it. You take this pin, and you won't have any trouble raising some money on it at a pawnshop. Or sell it, if you like."

"I can pawn it, mister. I can pawn it, and then when I get to earnin' money, I'll buy it back and return it to you."

"Well, that's honest of you," approved the young man. "No, I think you'd better keep it. A present. For the wife and kiddies."

"Yes, mister," said Slim, gratefully, as he pocketed the pin.

"I think you'd better leave that gun and the flash light here, so you won't be tempted to get into trouble again."

Under the circumstances, Slim could not object. "I never want to see them no more," he said.

"All right. Now run along. And good luck to you. Keep straight and work hard, old chap."

With this good advice in his ears, with joy in his heart, two dollars in his hand and the diamond stickpin in his pocket, Slim took his departure. Once again his lachrymose talent had extricated him from a tight fix. What a softie that young man had turned out to be! When he reached his room in the lodging house by the river he sat down on the cot and chuckled.

III

JUST then the good-looking young man was in an uptown apartment, divesting himself of his dinner coat and black tie. On the table lay a sparkling heap of jewelry and silverware, receiving the admiring scrutiny of a fat little fellow in a flowered dressing gown.

"Quite a haul! Quite a haul!" the fat man was saying. "There never was a guy in the soup-and-fish end of the racket could touch you, Joe."

"It was soft," returned the other. "I was glad I wore the ritzy duds, Mannie. I had a chance to do a favor to an old friend of mine."

"Yeah?"

"You remember the rat that tipped off the dicks to me after the Atlantic Hotel job six years ago? A bird that never even saw me before. One of those stool pigeons who pick up all the information they can get, and pass it along to the cops, just to keep themselves in right. He got wind that it was me pulled that job, and it cost me five years."

"Sure, I remember that guy," said Mannie. "Sobbing Slim, they call him. Turns on the weeps whenever he's jammed."

"That's the baby. Well, he blew into this joint to-night just when I had the box opened. I turned out the lights and stuck him up, and put it over on him that I was the son of the house, accidentally stayin' in town overnight. Then he went into his song-and-dance. If you ever heard a sob story! It was good. I nearly bust out cryin'."

"I'd have bust him over the dome," said Mannie, "after what he done to you."

"Wait. The minute he started the sob stuff I was onto him. I knew who he was then. So I let on I fell for the yarn, and I gave him two bucks, and a diamond stickpin from the box."

"You—you gave that guy a diamond stickpin!"

"Sure. And I took his flash light and his gat, finger-prints all over 'em, and they're lying beside the empty box now. And, Mannie, I want you to go out to a pay station and call up headquarters and tip the dicks off that there's been a job pulled off up at Nelson's house, and that Sobbing Slim was in on it. He'll need to do some

tall sobbing to explain that diamond stickpin when they find it on him, and all those finger-prints. He'll get about ten years extra when he can't cough up the rest of the junk, so that'll make us just about even. And I'd like to see his face when he finds out that old man Nelson hasn't got a son."

Mannie gave a whistle of amaze-

ment. "You son-of-a-gun!" he said solemnly.

"Reminds me of a line I learned in school," said Gentleman Joe Corrigan, as he unlaced his shoes. "It was: 'Beware of the Greeks when they come bearing gifts.' But I don't suppose our friend Sobbing Slim ever heard it."

Was He Crazy?

IT has often been said that nobody can tell what a jury will do. Here is an incident that seems to bear out the contention:

In a Chicago court a boy about nineteen years of age was charged with highway robbery. In any other place but Chicago such a crime would mean anywhere from twenty years to life. But it is of record that highway-men or "stickups," as they are called, of that seething metropolis, have been given sentences as low as thirty days in jail and sometimes small fines.

The evidence against this young fellow was absolute. He held up two men, getting, however, only a watch. The two men corroborated each other in detail, and then the accused got on the stand and told this story:

"On the morning that I was accused of robbing these men I was walking down Lakeshore drive, about four o'clock, on my way to the fishing grounds. I had a fishing pole over my shoulder. The hook evidently came out of the cork and dangled in the air, for when I got to the fishing grounds, that watch there, here as evidence against me, was hanging on the hook. The only way I can account for it is that the hook caught the gentleman's watch as I passed him."

The story was so fishy, in the light of known physical facts, that the prosecutor did not cross-examine him. The jury was out only a few minutes when they came in with a verdict of acquittal.

The judge jumped about a foot off the bench, exclaiming:

"What! Not guilty?"

"Yes, your honor," replied the foreman.

"How on earth could you come to any such conclusion?" inquired the judge. "There never was a clearer case of guilt in this court. Even the defendant's story was enough to convict him."

"It was the young man's story," the foreman said, "that caused us to acquit him, for no man in his proper senses would tell a story like that and expect us to believe it. That boy's as crazy as a March hare, and should be sent to the asylum instead of the penitentiary."

"But by your verdict you have freed him," retorted the court, "and I can do nothing but turn him loose."

And with an expression of deep disgust the court discharged both the prisoner and the jury.

...on the floor it's
TIME!



Chester
FINE TURKISH and DOMESTIC tobaccos,

...in a cigarette it's
TASTE!
TASTE above everything



When it comes to taste, the really fine cigarette begins where the average cigarette leaves off. Something more than ordinary tobaccos and routine care are needed to produce the aroma and character that are Chesterfield's own.

Not ordinary tobaccos, but tobaccos *chosen* one by one, in all the leaf markets of the world, for flavor, richness, mildness... tobaccos matured and mellowed by *ageing*, in Nature's perfect way.

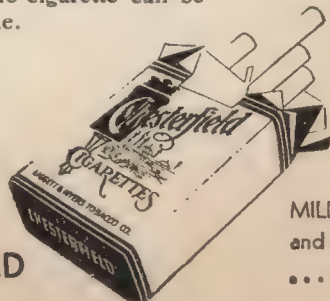
Not routine care, but tobaccos blended to scientific *balance*, to bring out the finer qualities that *make* a cigarette—and "cross-blended," the Chesterfield way, to round out and perfect the delicious flavor.

Chesterfield is much more than "something to smoke," just because each step is governed by taste, *above everything*. And long experience has taught us—and Chesterfield smokers as well—that a really fine cigarette can be made by no other rule.



field

not only BLENDED but CROSS-BLENDED



MILD...
and yet
... THEY SATISFY

CHARACTER REVEALED IN YOUR HANDWRITING

EDITOR'S NOTE — *'After making character analysis, through handwriting, his hobby for more than a score of years, John Fraser has recently won wide renown in New York City as a popular lecturer on this subject.*

He conducts a thriving business of analyzing character from handwriting; and many notables in this country



JOHN FRASER

and abroad have complimented him on the accuracy of his findings.

By special arrangement his personal analysis is given to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY readers for ten cents in STAMPS, or free with a \$1.00 subscription for thirteen issues (in Canada \$1.75 for subscription). Please fill out the special coupon.

*Set me all up
as others see*

D. McC., Victoria, British Columbia—You appeal to me as a man who can enjoy the beautiful things of nature, one who is never lonely so long as he has good literature around him. Your artistic tastes are pronounced, with the result that you show considerable skill in judging the æsthetic qualities of an object. It is very evident that the prosaic things of life do not fill all your horizon. Yours is the vision of one who indulges in day dreams, and builds many air castles.

You are a very affectionate sort of fellow and lean to the sentimental side of life. Your companionships are drawn from the opposite sex. You crave their company, as well as feed on their flattery. Your touchiness is something to be reckoned with. You belong to that type of people who are constantly carrying "chips on their shoulders." They are never done looking for trouble. They live for it, and

expect it, and consequently get what they are looking for.

This delicacy of feeling leads you many a time to be impulsive and petulant. You are unable to refrain from outbursts of temper, and seem to have an inherent love of contest. This scrappy nature of yours is expressed in ways that are hardly commendable. Fortunately your characteristics are not all bad. On the contrary, you have one or two which are highly commendable. For example, your manner of thought is always constructive. Your conclusions are dependable. You are extremely logical.

*detailed, accurate character
with suggestions for*

I. W. C., Portland, Maine—I find that you have a character such as is rarely encountered these days—prim-

arily because it is well-balanced and rounded in all essential qualities. This is rather unusual in this age of specialization. I see that where you may have a flair for business and organization, you temper it with a warm, emotional nature. Where you are practical and economical you are also imaginative and impulsive. There seem to be balances for every trait in your disposition, with the result that you are decidedly individual.

To come a little closer to your characteristics I would cite your mental refinement. You have the power of concentration. Your mind's eye is fixed on one thing, and rarely, if ever, turned away from it. This does not mean necessarily that you can retain only one idea at a time, but rather that you give deep consideration to any problem coming within your purview.

Another trait is your mental alertness. Your mind does not belong to the dormant, or passive variety. It is alive and always in quest of knowledge or information. You are a believer in the Franklin adage that "honesty is the best policy." Whether consciously or otherwise, you are straightforward in your dealings with men. This ability to look squarely at any one has made you a person one would instinctively trust—and that with implicit faith. Your weaknesses, as far as I can see, are all more or less subordinated to your virtues. Your whole nature appeals to me.

*has given, and
still giving, me*

Miss H. B. J., Ocean City, N. J.—You are a girl who has strong convictions. Your mind is alert, quick to grasp facts

and translate them into judgments. It is obvious to me that your physical force does not always measure up to your mental activity.

You apparently love order in everything you do. You have no use for those who are untidy or do slovenly work. You believe in moderation in all things. You seemingly have learned the value of hastening slowly. You are not a girl who will be rushed into hasty decisions or unconsidered acts. The fellow who thinks he can propose marriage to you in the cool of the evening and drive you round to the minister's door the following morning has another think coming to him. You would insist on having many beauty sleeps before you would consent to any such contract.

Socially, I would say, you are a good mixer. You are always suave and gracious in your manner and conversation. It is in your nature to be sportive and fanciful, with a decided flair for fun. Consequently you make friends readily and add much to the sociability of your group. This, however, does not imply that you are always a docile and patient companion. On the contrary, patience is one quality which is far from being pronounced in your make-up. You have a mean temper when things don't "break" as you want them to. You are also apt to be obstinate and stiff-necked when you don't get your own way. These feminine foibles are enough to detract from an otherwise strong personality, and if I were you I would endeavor to live above them as much as possible.

*when you turn it your
that I am finding out*

A. H., London, England—I can see

at once that you are a person of great individuality, possessing a distinctive personality, and unusual inherent ability. You are one of those people with a genius for success, who rise to the top of their field naturally and without undue effort. You have splendid powers of discrimination and form strong convictions. Once your mind is made up you cling tenaciously to your opinions. This is essentially Scotch, and typical of your nationality. In this connection I would call you a dyed-in-the-wool Scotchman, and a yard wide at that.

Physically, you are active and energetic and like to be on the go all the time. Your mind shares in this activity, and is constantly on the alert for new information. Your rapidity of thought is expressed in a rapidity of speech. I believe you find it hard for your tongue to keep pace with your

thoughts, particularly when your "dander" is up. Your nature is to be insistent and driving. A typical leader, but never a follower. This leads you to be opinionative at times, but, paradoxically, as it may seem, your modesty and your good taste never permit you to drown out the claims of others by the thunder of your own self-importance.

I must say you are a remarkably unassuming fellow, though you have ample cause to be satisfied with yourself. You care nothing for the limelight. You much prefer to do your work behind the scenes and let some one else take the curtain calls. Your weak points are by no means accentuated. You are not a saint, but I would call you a man who is head and shoulders above a great many who are making more fuss and doing less good in the world.

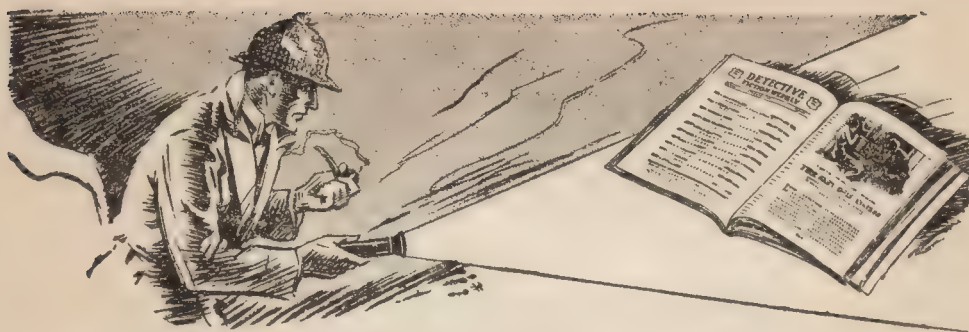
Do you want Mr. Fraser's analysis of your character?

Then send the coupon and six lines of your handwriting, in ink, with ten cents in STAMPS; or one dollar for a thirteen-weeks' subscription (in Canada, one dollar and seventy-five cents) to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY and a FREE analysis! Mr. Fraser will write you a personal letter.

To John Fraser, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway, N. Y. City

Signature.....

Street..... City.....



FLASHES FROM READERS

*Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

IT'S hot this summer, hotter than we can remember it ever having been before, but—

We have discovered that there is nothing like a mystery story to make heat victims quit grumbling. It may be the cold chills that gallop down your spine, or it may be the gripping yarns that chase all other thoughts away. At any rate, detective fiction helps a fellow to forget the heat wave.

Here are some of the thrilling things you can look for in the near future. "I Come Creeping," a breath-taking serial by Alan Forsyth, author of "The Murder Cult." "Protection Money," a full length novelette about the great detective, *Riordan*, by Victor Maxwell. A *Lester Leith* novelette, "Faster Than Forty," by Erle Stanley Gardner. A *Craig Kennedy* story by Arthur B. Reeve. A great, true serial by Charles Somerville—"Captain Lightfoot." *Arty Beale* in an adventure with a sinister underworld chieftain, "A Ride in the Park," by Ruth and Alexander Wilson. And stories by John Hunter, Joseph Gollomb, Harold de Polo, Edward Parrish Ware, Rob-

ert H. Rohde, Murray Leinster, Howard McLellan, Eddie Guerin, Carroll John Daly, Garret Smith, Don H. Thompson, Wyndham Martyn, and all the other old favorites.

CHANDA-LUNG FAN

DEAR SIR:

I am sending the ten Choice Coupons and will be glad to receive an artist's drawing. I have been reading *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY* for two years and I sure like it. I like best the *Chanda-Lung* stories—what's happened to them? How about some more of them? Next I like the *Lester Leith* stories best. Hoping to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

J. MAURICE HOWELL,
Chicago, Ill.

WILL SAVE HIS DIMES

DEAR EDITOR:

I just finished reading the novelette, "The Murder at Gray Gables," and want to ask any of the many readers of your magazine if they ever saw, or rather heard, thunder in the winter time with snow on the ground six inches deep. I have been in countries where it was nothing to have two feet of snow and bitter cold weather, but I have never experienced hearing thunder along with a strong wind and snow at the same time.

So please tell the writer, Whitman Chambers, that he is all wrong. His story would have been interesting if he had cut it shorter and not have dragged it along so. The true

stories are the bunk and so is John Fraser's analyses. He was a mile out in mine. Why not give us a good story in the space he clutters up?

I have been reading your magazine for some time now, but think I will save my ten cents and add a few more dimes to it and buy a real magazine.

I don't expect to see this in print, as you never publish the letters that "knock."

Yours sincerely,

M. H. LEWIS,

Pittsburgh, Pa.

DOESN'T LIKE GANGLAND STORIES

DEAR EDITOR:

Inclosed are ten vote coupons for which please send me one of the original drawings as stated in your magazine.

And now may I add a bit of advice?

The only real fault I can find with your magazine is that there isn't enough of it. I always finish it the day it arrives and then I feel lost until the next week brings another one.

In my estimation the serials are the "feature" of the magazine, and I wish you would print at least two.

The fact stories are the "spice of the program" and I think there should be at least three or four.

But please don't print any more stories about the modern criminal "gang." As reading matter they are not at all interesting.

My favorites are *Sergeant Riordan*, *Lester Leith* and *Jack Calhoun*, but I wouldn't want them every week. Just once in awhile. I also enjoy the stories about the Canadian Mounted.

Let me congratulate you on your *Bulldog Drummond* story. I am sure all your readers will like him.

I almost forgot *Saxophone Smithers*. I think he is one of your best characters. Please let us hear more about him.

Very truly yours,

HAZEL JUELKE FATH,

McKee's Rocks, Pa.

A YOUNG VOICE

DEAR SIRs:

Inclosed please find ten My Choice coupons for which I would appreciate it if you would send me a free picture.

I am one of your youthful readers; I am a high school student, fifteen years old. I stumbled on a copy on a news-stand in 1928 and have been reading it ever since. I will probably read it till my dying day.

I like the stories by Victor Maxwell and Maxwell Smith best, but all the other au-

thors are good. I like continued stories best. I don't care so much for the true stories as you can read them in the newspapers every day.

Hoping that your magazine continues to be as interesting as it has been to date, I remain,

Yours very truly,

EMIL SCHOTT,

Mifflintown, Pa.

A BEER MUG AND A MYSTERY

DEAR EDITOR:

Inclosed find ten votes for an original drawing.

Have read *Flynn's* since the first issue and enjoy every number. *Ranger Calhoun*, *Tug Norton*, *Riordan*, and the *Lester Leith* stories are my favorites. I also enjoy the fact stories very much; in fact, have no fault to find with your magazine except that it is issued only once a week. Have your latest number at one elbow and a cold quart of beer at the other, so mind and body are being looked after; both cost fifteen cents each, and I feel that I'm getting very good entertainment cheap. Here's how and success to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Yours truly,

A. A. BROUGHTON,

Montreal, Quebec.

"HERE'S MY VOTE"

Editor,

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,

280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

I did not like.....

because.....

Name.....

Street.....

City.....

State.....

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

"IN that 'earthbreaking little ditty entitled *Bloomin' Barmaid Biffs Bloody Bum*, by J. Lloyd Hood," writes John E. York, "I stumbled onto three little vowels all in a row in the first verse—*eau*—and it was all over but the shouting." Our correspondent refers, of course, to Mr. Hood's fascinating alliterative crypt of May 25, which follows with translation:

CLOSPUYSH,	CSQER,	CHEAT,
Beautiful,	buxom,	blond,
CZOXL	COZROUT	CHSYDD
brave	barmaid	bluffs
CZOGAB	CSZIHQZ,	CLZOPUAI
brawny	burglar,	berating
CZSPUDF,	CLHHUJEDL	CHOJN-
brutish,	bellicose	black-
ISOZT	CUPPLZHB.	
guard	bitterly.	

Several other fans also pinned their faith in the first word of this cryptogram. "Primrose," for example, began by assuming that the suffix -YSH was -ful, because of the low frequency of Y. Substituting for the other S gave him ---u--ful, which soon suggested *beautiful*. "Nice A. M.," our correspondent in France, and A. G. Metzler worked through the same suffix, but substituted in the sixth word, obtaining -luff-, obviously *bluff*.

A number of fans spotted C, through its use only as an initial, as probably signifying one of the normally low frequency consonants *b*, *f* or *p*. Upon this supposition the symbols following C would probably be vowels or the consonants *l* and *r*. *L* is easy to identify as *e* because of its use as a final; and other letters follow. With a

few letters known by any method the solution is soon completed by substitution and context.

The first two of this week's puzzles are interesting replies to the recent cryptogram by Don Sleeth. You can get started with No. 1 by comparing HOW, HOWF, WUWLF, and CLW. Note the high frequency of G in No. 2, and the predominating use of E as an initial and final. Also remember that the subject matter is similar to No. 1. "Here's one that 'll make 'em perspire!" writes the author of No. 3, who believes his offering will put you on your mettle. Solutions submitted to No. 3 will be featured, as space permits, in an early issue.

No. 1—By Isabel Revord.

HOW CAUWLN "CNMHWPYDI-MKF" EDTHCYTM WUWLF UD-GWK; PDLWDUWL HOWF CLW YT CKSOCNWHYECK DLAWL.

No. 2—By "Primrose."

EJOTYAF BYCDGH EGBHGIE, KLAG MYHEI, NEPE NQJLI LAYRLG SJHU. GVIHN GTGHWTJSGO EGR LGAI IWCG EDJSE "MNBGIY-JLEOW."

No. 3—By John E. York.

DNMRV XOGNZ KXCPZFMYRX TBMJK FPZJPU, IYEFBJYOS XHV-JBJYH AXCJP, TPYMVJ GXFRZ, AYVGLOHJ GBKK IXWXV.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1—While he sat there, a white figure stole from the shadows and moved without a sound toward the door.

2—Black mire and hidden pools sometimes breed man-eating alligators and slithering, poisonous moccasins.

3—Quoting ancient, mystic Oriental word, zephyr removed jinx. Earth again became safe for democrats. Chronicle many years old. (Clew: -EFH and IHIEF -ing and again.)

COMING NEXT WEEK!

THROUGH the doors of old *Doc Fay's* East Side Mission—"The House"—poured an endless stream of down and outs, sinister figures. Fresh from the penitentiary many of them were. Criminals? Bad men? Certainly. *Doc* knew it, but *Doc* was also ready to help them on the rough road back to honesty and decency.

There were few rules at the House. There was no charity. Just credit. Credit that must be paid off with honest money—when earned! No hurry about that. Above the fireplace, engraved in the stones, was a single word: *Silence*. *Doc* never asked questions.

Then one day there came to the mission a man who had been railroaded to prison—and a girl with the eyes of "a good woman." Three men looked into those eyes, and suddenly the quiet little mission was plunged into a chaos of gang warfare, smuggling and bloodshed.

Doc tried to stand aside. But he was drawn in deeper and deeper, and when the "good woman" was caught red-handed in a terrible crime, he pitted his beloved mission against the police that she was innocent of wrongdoing.

What was there in the eyes of this woman that prompted the faithful saver of souls to stake his life's work and reputation? Why did *Doc* break his traditional silence to aid *Tommy Henderson*, her ex-convict lover, to escape the "spot" set for him by *Razor Jenkins*? And why, in the end, did *Doc* remain strangely silent when a word might have united a sister and brother at a deathbed?

Carroll John Daly weaves an intensely human and gripping drama of underworld life, beginning in the next issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. You will breathlessly follow this moving conflict of emotions, and the struggle of these people out of the depths into which fate and circumstance plunge them. You, too, when a word offers a seemingly easy short cut, will fight with the valiant old *Doc Fay* for

"The Right to Silence"

Among the other DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY writers who will appear in the next issue are ERLE STANLEY GARDNER with a *Lester Leith* novelette, JOHN HUNTER, EDDIE GUERIN, EDWARD PARRISH WARE, and CHARLES KINGSTON.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—August 10



Outdoors adored...indoors ignored

OUTDOORS they adored this gay Philadelphia girl. She was continually surrounded with admirers. But indoors it was another story. She was hopelessly out of things.

The truth is that her trouble which went unnoticed in the open, became instantly apparent in the drawing room.

No intelligent person dares to assume complete freedom from halitosis (unpleasant breath).

Surveys show one person out of three is an occasional or habitual offender. This is due to the fact that odor-producing conditions (often caused by germs) exist in even the most perfect mouths.

The one way of keeping your breath always beyond suspicion is to rinse the mouth with full strength Listerine every morning and night and before meeting others.

Being a germicide capable of killing even the Staphylococcus Aureus (pus) germ in 15 seconds, full strength Listerine first strikes at the cause of odors, and then, being a powerful deodorant, destroys the odors themselves. Yet it is entirely safe to use. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

THE SAFE ANTISEPTIC
LISTERINE

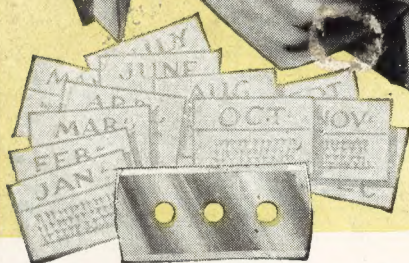


And Now A MACHINE

To Make Shaving 50% Easier and 100% Cheaper!

Unique Invention Arouses a Whirlwind of National Interest . . . Achieves Amazing Records of Unbelievably KEEN, Cool Shaves . . . Special Introductory Offer in Force Right Now.

**Just Turn
The Crank**



ONE BLADE LASTS 365 DAYS

THIS is the age of amazing scientific discoveries. And now comes the most surprising invention of all—a machine that absolutely revolutionizes shaving!

Just think of a device that can take any ordinary razor blade on the market and multiply its sharpness 50% to 100% in exactly 11 seconds! And just imagine what a slick, painless shave you can get when your blade is about twice as keen as any you have ever tried before!

No More Blades to Buy

But that isn't all, KRISS-KROSS not only stropps blades to unbelievable sharpness—but it makes them last indefinitely! Day after day—week after week—you can keep using the same old blade and still get smoother, better shaves than you now get from a blade right out of a fresh package! Any number of cases are on record where one blade has lasted over a year and is still going strong. And M. T. Main of Kenosha, Wisconsin, has used one single blade for more than five solid years of the coolest shaves he ever got in his life!

Rejuvenates All Makes of Razor Blades

KRISS-KROSS is so remarkable that it is more a blade-rejuvenator than a stropper. It embodies 7 mechanical features that have long baffled inventors. Works on all brands of blades except Durham. Reproduces the magic diagonal stropping-stroke of the master razor. Reverses blade automatically, then the other. Starts re and finishes lig

Nickel jig files up to notify you when blade is ready with the keenest cutting edge steel can take!

Generous Introductory Offer

KRISS-KROSS is never sold in stores—but only through authorized representatives in each locality. Right now, we are making a generous offer and are giving a new kind of 3-way, adjustable razor FREE to introduce KRISS-KROSS. Use the coupon below to get details of this unusual invention and offer. See for yourself how ingenious KRISS-KROSS is and what undreamed-of shaving comfort it holds in store for you. No obligation. Clip the coupon now. Mail it today!

AGENTS \$30 a Day

KRISS-KROSS is an astonishing money maker and brings excellent profits to men who are willing to act as our representatives in their home territories. Many earn \$30-\$60 a day and others are making \$5,000 and \$7,500 a year clear profit. Spare-time agents often take in \$6-\$12 an evening and up to \$200 a month. We give you an extremely generous proposition and show you just how to get started the easiest way. Write for information and see just exactly what we offer. It will pay you to investigate. Check bottom line of coupon below and mail it today!

Rhodes' KRISS KROSS

RHODES KRISS-KROSS CORP., Dept. K-423, 1418 Pendleton Ave., ST. LOUIS, MO

World's Largest Mfrs. of Mechanical Stroppers

Canadian Address: CANADIAN KRISS-KROSS CO.,
39 Wellington Street East, Toronto 2, Canada.

RHODES KRISS-KROSS CORP., Dept. K-423, 1418 Pendleton Ave., St. Louis, Mo.
Without obligation, please send me complete illustrated explanation showing how KRISS-KROSS rejuvenates all types of razor blades (except Durham). Also give me details of your special introductory offer and the Free 3-way razor you are giving away at present.

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....

Check this ☐ if interested in becoming an agent